



PC GAMER®

BRITAIN'S BEST

UK DVD Edition £5.99
Christmas 2004 Issue 143
www.pcgamer.co.uk

THROW
A XMAS
LAN PARTY
THE GAMES
THE PROBLEMS
THE COST
SOLVED

BACK TO HELL!

DOOM 3 RESURRECTION OF EVIL

THE BEST
REVIEWS!



LOTR: BATTLE FOR
MIDDLE-EARTH
PRINCE OF PERSIA
WARRIOR WITHIN
NEED FOR SPEED
UNDERGROUND 2
MEN OF VALOUR
AXIS & ALLIES
GALAXIES: JUMP
TO LIGHTSPEED
MORE

SPECIAL
REPORT!

IT'S ALIVE!

How developers make
games feel real



EXTRA
LIFE...

FEATURING Half-Life WWI mod ➤ The Sims 2 sitcom
➤ Quake 3 Lilliput mod ➤ City of Heroes comic
➤ Enemy Territory mod ➤ Suicidal robots ➤ How to
be a Jedi ➤ Max Payne: Dead Man Walking
➤ EverQuest gambling ➤ And more PC joy...

FIRST
REVIEW!

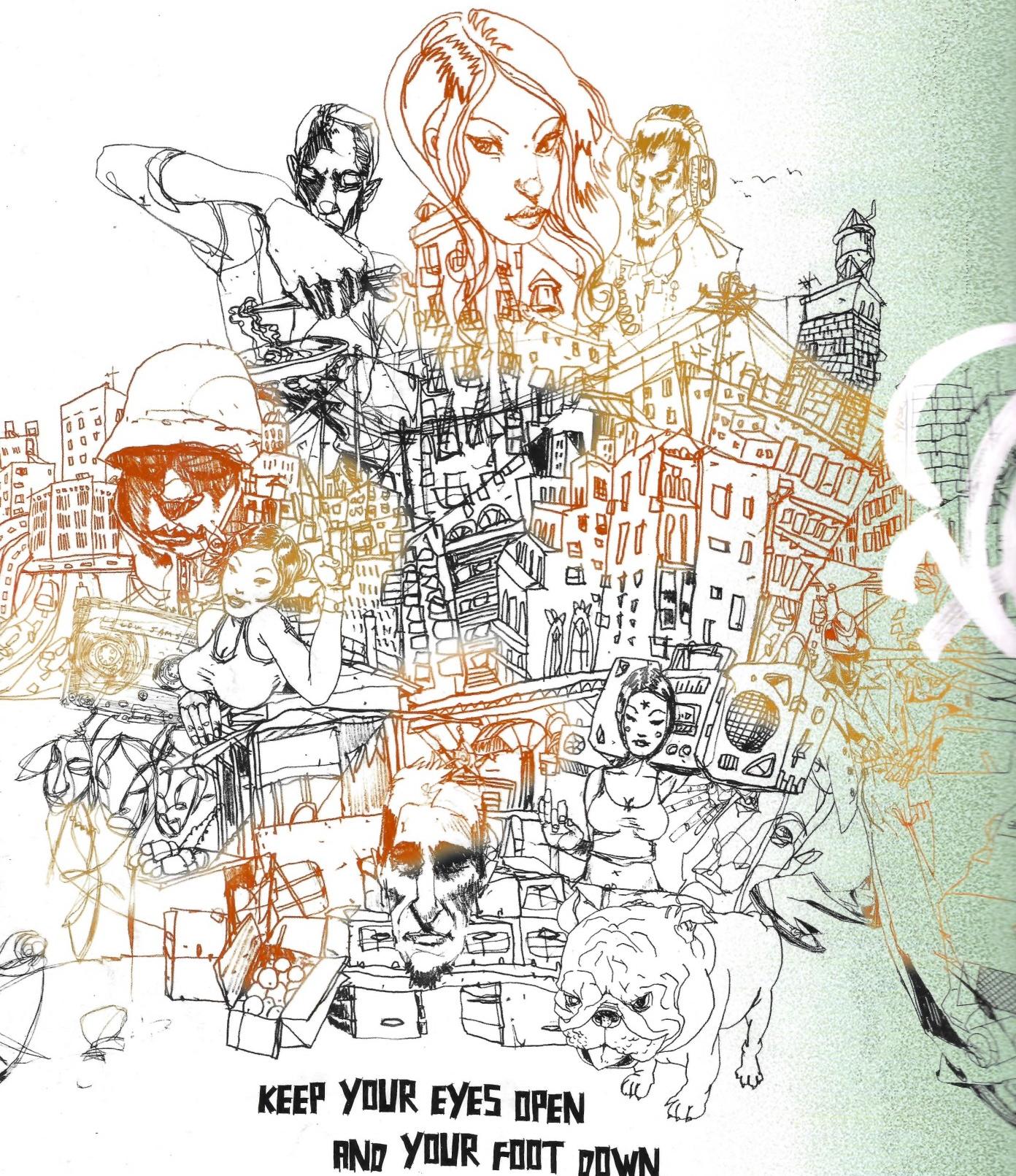
NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND 2



Christmas 2004 DVD £5.99
Barcode 9 771470 169009
PRINTED IN THE UK



GAMING LAPTOPS SUPERTEST



**KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN
AND YOUR FOOT DOWN.**



PlayStation®2

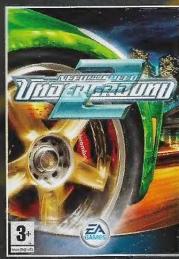


GAME BOY ADVANCE



INTERNET CONNECTION REQUIRED for online play. PlayStation 2 online play requires Internet Connection, Network Adaptor (for PlayStation 2) and Memory Card (MB) for PlayStation 2 (each sold separately). Online play may not be available on all platforms. See product card for details.
© 2001 Electronic Arts Inc. Electronic Arts, EA, Challenge Everything, EA GAMES, EA GAMES logo, and Need for Speed are trademarks or registered trademarks of Electronic Arts Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. All rights reserved. Mazda RX-8 is a registered trademark of Mazda Motor Corporation. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox Live, the Xbox logo, and the Xbox logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. PlayStation and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. NINTENDO, NINTENDO GAMECUBE, NINTENDO ARTS, and NINTENDO ARTS TRADEMARKS OF NINTENDO. EA GAMES™ is an Electronic Arts™ brand. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

Go anywhere. Go anywhere fast. Go anywhere fast looking like a damn pimp. eagames.co.uk/needforspeed

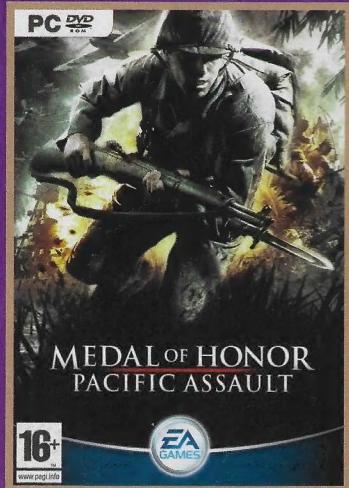


Challenge Everything™

Save £10

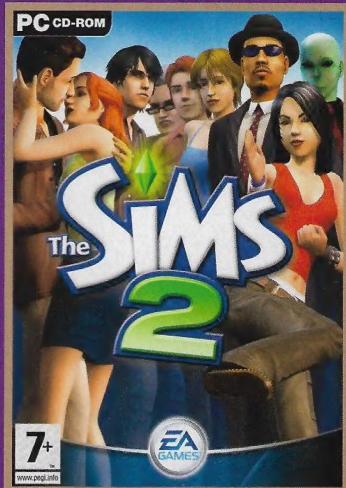
When you buy any two chart games[†]

© 2003 Electronic Arts Inc. EA and the EA logo, MEDAL OF HONOR, MEDAL OF HONOR: PACIFIC ASSAULT and EA GAMES are trademarks or registered trademarks of Electronic Arts Inc. All rights reserved. EA and the EA logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Electronic Arts Inc. All rights reserved. All other trademarks and/or service marks belong to their respective owners. EA GAMES is an electronic Arts brand.



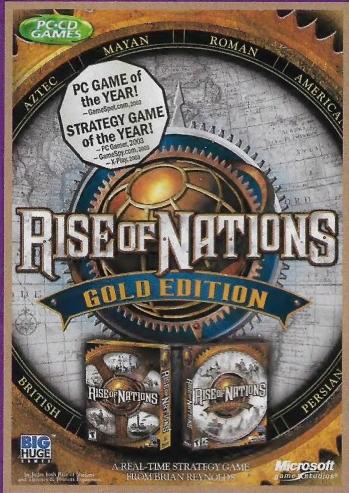
**Medal Of Honor
Pacific Assault**
PC

© 2004 Electronic Arts Inc. EA GAMES, THE SIMS, EA GAMES logo, Sims and the Sims logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Electronic Arts Inc. and/or its other companies and/or affiliates. All rights reserved. A third party license is also present. All other trademarks and/or service marks belong to their respective owners. EA GAMES and EA are trademarks of Electronic Arts Inc.



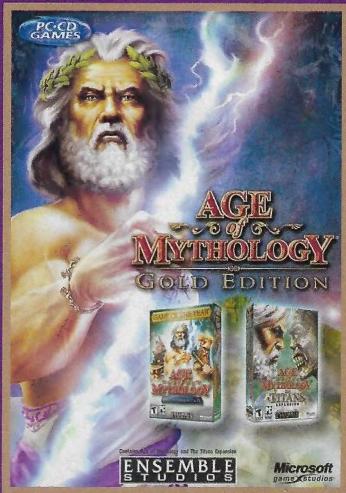
The Sims™ 2
PC

GLOBAL MUSEUM CORPORATION. A 1995 version of Microsoft® Age of Nations™ was sold in the United States and Canada.



**Rise Of Nations®
Gold Edition**
PC

© 2004 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Microsoft, Age of Mythology, Ensemble Studios, MySpace and Age of Empires are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corp. in the United States and/or other countries.



**Age Of Mythology®
Gold Edition**
PC

**GET
MONEY OFF
VOUCHERS WORTH £100
WHEN YOU SPEND £20 OR MORE***

*£20 or more must be spent in one transaction. One voucher booklet per customer. Voucher booklet and titles are subject to availability. Vouchers valid 29/12/04 until 31/03/05. Terms & conditions apply. Ask in-store for details.

†Offer applies only to product bearing this sticker

buy now: hmv.co.uk

top dog for christmas gifts



HMV



PC GAMER

BRITAIN'S BEST-SELLING PC GAMES MAGAZINE

THE PC GAMER TEAM

Editor	Mark Donald
Deputy Editor	Ross Atherton
Technical Editor	Mark Sutthers
Art Editor	Mark Wynne
Disc Editor	Tom Francis
Deputy Art Editor	Amanda Neal
Production Editor	Tony Ellis
Writer	Craig Pearson
Writer	Tim Edwards

CONTRIBUTORS

Jon Hicks, John Walker, Kieron Gillen, Richard Cobbett, Jim Rossignol, Richard Millington, Chris Buxton, Duncan Leigh, Mike Abolins, Andy McGregor, Will Jenkins, Tim Stone, Steve Williams, Mike Abolins, Jeremy Laird, Dan Girolopoulos, Derek Stedman, Mark Horne, Rob Taylor, Owain Bennallack, Dave Morris, Photography Studio, illustrations by David Lyttleton

WANT TO SUBSCRIBE? 0870 444 8660
Email: pcgamer.subs@futurenet.co.uk

SHOP OUT OF STOCK? 01225 442244
Circulation Manager Russell Hughes

WANT TO PLACE AN AD? 01225 442244
Advertising Manager Darren Grattan
Classified Chris Thom

MISSED AN ISSUE? 0870 444 8459
Email: customerservice@futurenet.co.uk

UNSUB HEROES
Senior Production Co-ordinator Kirsty Bell
Production Manager Rose Griffiths
Commercial Print Buyer Colin Polis
Software Copyright Co-ordinator Sarah Williams
Marketing Manager Ben Payne
Promotions Manager Tamara Longden

HIERARCHY
Assistant Publisher Matthew Pierce
Group Art Editor Rob Abbott
Art Director Matt Williams
Editorial Director Jim Douglas
Ad Director Jayne Caple
International Licensing Director Simon Wear
Publishing Director Mia Roberts

Distributed by Marketforce (UK) Ltd, 5th Floor, Low Rise Building, Kings Reach Tower, Stamford Street, London, SE1 9LS Tel 0207 633 3300

Printed in the UK by Southern Print, Unit 17-19, Factory Road, Upton Industrial Estate, Poole, Dorset BH16 5SN



Our monthly sales figure is
57,748
January - June 2004



Future Publishing is part of The Future Network plc. The Future Network produces carefully targeted specialist magazines for people who share a passion. We aim to satisfy that passion by creating titles offering value for money, reliable information, smart buying advice and which are a pleasure to read. Today we publish more than 100 magazines in the UK, US, France and Italy. Over 100 international editions of our magazines are also published in 30 other countries across the world.

The Future Network plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FNET).

Managing Director UK Robert Price
Non-executive Chairman Roger Parry
Chief Executive Greg Ingham
Group Finance Director John Bowman
www.thefuturenetwork.plc.uk
PC GAMER is Future Publishing Limited's registered trademark. All rights reserved.
© Future Publishing Ltd. 2004

www.pcgamer.co.uk

This month, we've been...



GETTING BLOODY...

...with grotesque gore-'em-up *The Punisher*. Ban this sick filth? We certainly hope not.



GOBLIN BASHING...

...in *The Lord of the Rings: The Battle For Middle-Earth*. But is it all orc and no trousers?



28

GOING TO HELL...

...in a breech-loading, double-barrelled handbasket, with the scoop on *Doom 3*'s just-announced expansion, *Resurrection of Evil*. Those demons just don't know when they've had enough, do they? Perhaps you can help.



SLICING...

...through foes in *Prince of Persia: Warrior Within*. We deliver our razor-sharp verdict.



PARTYING...

...like it's 19:59. All in the name of 24 hours research into the perfect LAN party.

This month's
weakspot:
The trigger
finger

Now that's a gun...

But enough of the life-affirming imagery. We all know the truth. You can tell you're a gamer when the clocks go back and you get a secret, unspoken thrill from the anticipation of the extra hours of darkness.

You feel a grim sense of satisfaction when the rain lashes down at a weekend. Knowing that to go outside is an impossibility and that the only alternative is to play through all 300 years of the *Rome: Total War* campaign. On Very Hard.

Time spent in pubs with friends makes you restless and resentful. Vital hours of *Counter-Strike* practice are being lost forever.

If people really want to speak with you, then they can just log on to the *World of Warcraft* beta test and make themselves useful, helping you to bash wild boar.

The drone of the milkman's float and the sweet alarm of the dawn chorus is your signal to go to bed, not get up.

You're fully versed in WWII small arms tactics thanks to your mastery of *Call of Duty*'s Browning Automatic Rifle. Might come in handy one day. If a loved one asked you to choose between gaming and them, you would be forced to let them go. After all, no one who *really* loved you could ever ask you to make such a choice.

MARK DONALD
EDITOR

Send letters

PC Gamer, 29 Monmouth Street,
Bath, BA1 2BW

Email us

pcgamer@futurenet.co.uk

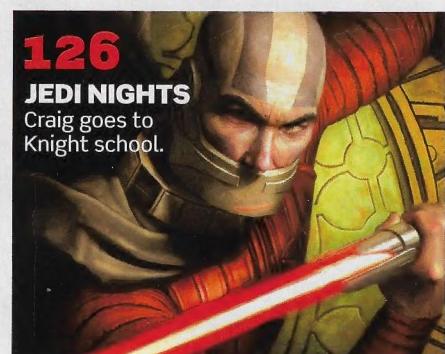
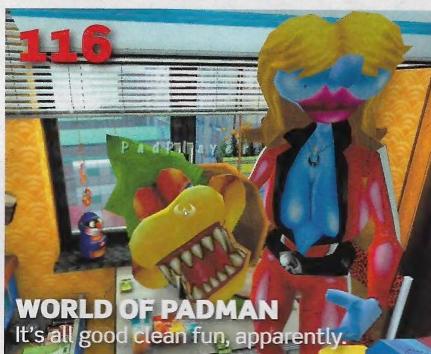
Stay in touch

<http://newsletter.pcgamer.co.uk>
Sign up to our weekly e-bulletin.

PC GAMER



PC GAMER MUST BUY
★★★★★
88
NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND 2
Guaranteed packed with spoilers! Boom-tish. Now stop looking at that girl and read the review.



CONTENTS

08 Eyewitness

News on the games that matter

24 Special Report

Fetch a hanky - games are getting emotional.

34 Previews

Doom 3: Resurrection of Evil **28**, Brothers in Arms **34**, Knights of the Old Republic 2 **36**, Stronghold 2 **38**, Boiling Point **40**, Star Wars Republic Commando **42**, Close Combat **44**

46 Cables

Disgruntled of Tunbridge Wells writes.

50 Gamer Snap

It just shouldn't be funny. Sometimes, it's not.

52 Uncensored

Your reviews. They have to go somewhere.

54 Big Quiz/Winners

Win a jealousy-inspiring Alienware laptop.

59 Reviews

Battle for Middle-Earth	60
Men of Valour	64
Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude	66
LMA Professional Manager 2005	68
Worms Forts: Under Siege	70
SWG: Jump To Lightspeed	73
Xpand Rally	74
Prince of Persia: Warrior Within	76
Blitzkrieg: Rolling Thunder	80
Athens 2004	80
Mortyr II	82
Space Empires IV Gold	84
Shadow Ops	85
NBA Live 2005	86
Need For Speed Underground 2	88
Top Spin	92
A Tale in the Desert 2	94
Axis & Allies	96
Club Football	98
Pitfall: The Lost Expedition	98
Tony Hawk's Underground 2	100
The Moment of Silence	102
Sonic Heroes	103
THEY'RE BACK	104
WHERE ARE THEY NOW?	106
BIG GAME HUNT	108

110 Downloader

True Combat: Elite **110**, Half-Life: The Trenches **111**, Natural Selection: Hivemind **112**, EVE Online tools **113**, Max Payne 2 DMW levels **114**

118 Mod News

Sci-fi total conversion for Tribes, Planescape fan-made sequel, and a terrorism Source mod

120 D-I-Y

Making Joint Ops maps is a doddle, says Derek Stedman. He shows us just how easy it is.

122 Long Play

The Longest Journey and Total Annihilation are reappraised through modern eyes.

124 Culture

Stories from around the gaming world.

132 World of E-Sports

The latest news of our cyber-athletes.

136 Systems

Gaming laptops are rubbish, right? Wrong. Follow our tips for mobile gaming heaven.

138 Money Pit

Sexy little beasts: the world's flashiest laptops rated.



143 Big Gear Hunt

The essential hardware list.

144 Play Faster

Tackling tech problems confronting Rome: Total War, Half-Life 2 and The Sims 2.

146 24-Hour Party People

SPECIAL FEATURE There's nothing finer than inviting your mates round and stringing your PCs together for an orgy of gaming and pizza. We know, we've done it.

156 On the Discs

Your guide to this issue's highlights.

162 It's All Over

But don't worry, we'll be back in a few weeks. See you then!

ON THE DISC PC GAMER is more than just a magazine. Articles sporting this sign are enhanced by extras on the disc.

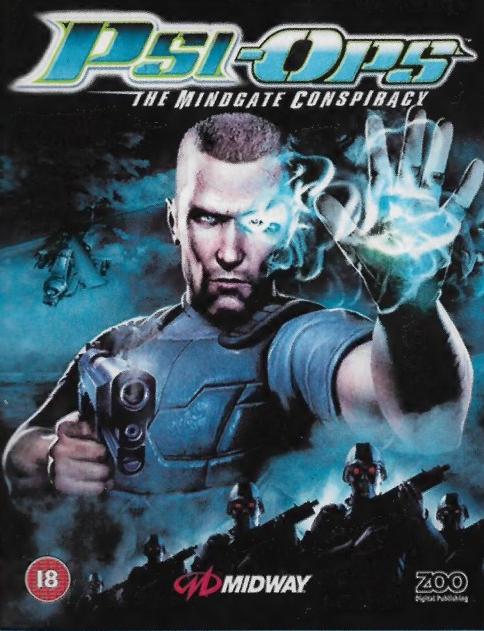


PSI-Ops™

THE MINDGATE CONSPIRACY



PC DVD-ROM



91%

PLAY

8/10

XBOX
MAGAZINE

MIND DRAIN

REMOTE VIEWING

YOUR MIND IS THE
ULTIMATE WEAPON.

WWW.PSIOPSGAME.COM

Buy online at www.zoodigitalpublishing.com

18

PC CD-ROM

Z MIDWAY

ZOO
Digital Publishing
www.zoodigitalpublishing.com

© 2004 ZOO Digital Publishing Ltd. ZOO Digital Publishing and the ZOO Digital Publishing logo are trademarks of ZOO Digital Publishing Ltd., part of the ZOO Digital Group plc. Psi-Ops © 2004 Midway Home Entertainment Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Eyewitness

YOUR MOST WANTED

Latest info on the games you want

1 HALO 2 SEEING OUT

Proof, if it were ever needed, that we're all gamers at heart. An Xbox game that hasn't even been confirmed for the PC sits atop your Most Wanted list. To be fair, it is only a matter of time. We have the first *Halo*, and it was always supposed to be ours anyway. But we'll be letting Microsoft know of your interest.

The twin daemons of tragedy and elation dominate the *Halo 2* story this month. On October 14, the French version of *Halo 2* was leaked to the internet. Usergroups and torrent sites soon had the code



ready for download. The source of the leak is still unknown. (Call us biased, but we suspect a French person.)

Bungie, to their credit, didn't take refuge in the fingers-



Bungie unleash the Mark IV software-leak detector from its catacomb beneath Paris.



"I learnt everything I know from David Blaine."



"Pah. Zug balance on one leg long time. It easy."

in-ears policy that a lot of the industry uses, and asked the community for help. We'll have to wait and see if any is forthcoming.

Better news: *Halo 2* is the most pre-ordered game ever. Over 1.5 million pre-orders were taken for the November release. If you calculate an average of \$50 per sale, you get 75 million dollars. That's a bigger opening day than any Hollywood movie has ever made.

**Official ETA Nothing so far
We say November 2005**

2 SPLINTER CELL 3 CALL YOUR MP

Another game that's slipped, this time into the vague, murky shadows of "Q1 2005" as the men in suits like to call it. In an effort to appease those of us who were hoping to find Sam Fisher in our stockings this Christmas (so to speak), Ubisoft have let slip some multiplayer details.

ess



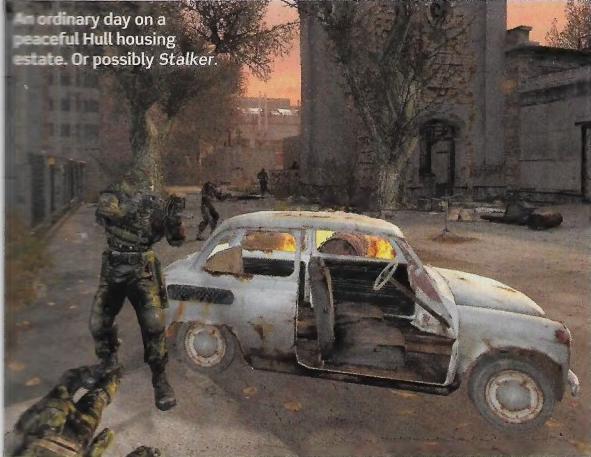
New single-cell lifeform spotted...

First up, after some initial worry, the Versus mode will return to the multiplayer. There was some fear that it would be dropped for the co-operative mode, but rather appropriately, the two exist side-by-side. The Versus mode will be stealing some moves from the co-op mode, so that spies can work together and heft one another to higher ground. Ubisoft's high-tech hide-and-seek between third-person spies and first-person mercs is evolving into a beautiful, if niche, component of the *Splinter Cell* games.

The co-op mode itself is looking as exciting as ever. Two players join up online and help each other through the missions. It's just like the single-player, but far more social. The only new bit of information released is something called the 'knife challenge mode'. Until our own spies report back with more information, we can only guess: perhaps a knives-only setting? What is clear is that such innovations in the co-op mode bode well for the rest of the game.

Official ETA Early 2005
We say **March**

An ordinary day on a peaceful Hull housing estate. Or possibly Stalker.



The world of *Stalker* is an unusually dynamic one...



"This week, I shall be mostly stalking Britney."

3 STALKER THE BANANA PEEL EFFECT

We'll have to wait until the middle of next year to play GSC's Chernobyl-based mutant shooter. The game's essentially finished, with the world and objects in place, but the AI, a crucial element in a game such as this, still needs to be thoroughly tested.

Why is good AI so important? Well, the world of *Stalker: Shadow of Chernobyl* is unusually dynamic one. As soon as the game kicks off, 100 of your fellow Stalkers begin scouring the radioactive zone for artefacts. It's a truly 'living' world, and that takes a lot of work to code: GSC are attempting to bring the experience of an MMO to the singleplayer game. It's the robustness of the AI behind these NPCs that they need to test. Every game should be different, but every game should work, too.

Remarkably, THQ aren't putting any pressure on the team to finish the game. They're allowing the developers the time to make *Stalker* the game it can be, and considering it's the game that everyone in the office wants to play after *Half-Life 2*, that can only be a good thing.

Official ETA May 2005
We say **Let's hope so**

"You know, it's really hard to slip through their defences like a phantom when you keep doing that, Steve."



WIN A GAME

MY MOST WANTED

Register your excitement!

The Most Wanted chart is voted for by the PC GAMER readership. Every issue we compile your votes for the upcoming games you're most excited about and then hunt down the very latest news, screenshots and insider information we can find. Help us by voting, and if your name is pulled out of Ross' pointy hat of sorcery, you'll win a bag of goodies.

MY TOP FIVE MOST WANTED GAMES:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Name _____

Address _____

Send your **MOST WANTED** to PC GAMER,
29 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2DL
Or email mostwanted@futurenet.co.uk

Congratulations to **Jay Woods** of St Ives, who wins a big sack of game goodies from the fabled PC GAMER cupboard of games.

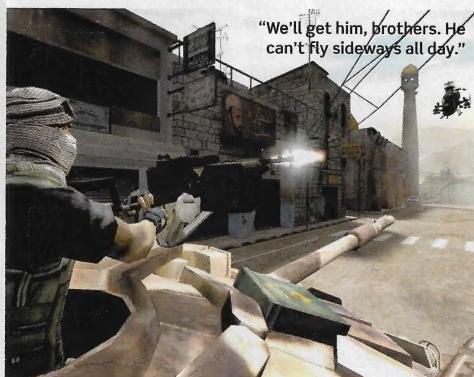
YOUR 10 MOST WANTED

4 BATTLEFIELD 2 HOLY BROWN STUFF

On our DVD there's a new *Battlefield 2* trailer. It provoked exclamations of "Oh. My. God", from anyone who sat down and watched it. Here's why. It begins with a MMO modern-day war scene. Jets flit around the periphery of the map, tanks, choppers and soldiers defend bases from bad guys.

The chopper is beautifully modelled. One of those war beasts where the doors are left open for the gunners to hang out and drill innocent rice farmers. The camera cuts to the jet. A missile drops from the jet's wing, then takes flight straight for the chopper.

The chopper is sideways on to the missile. The missile goes straight in one door and straight out of the other, passing right through in an instant that must have been



"We'll get him, brothers. He can't fly sideways all day."



The same Hull housing estate, later that night. Oh all right, it's *GTA: San Andreas*.

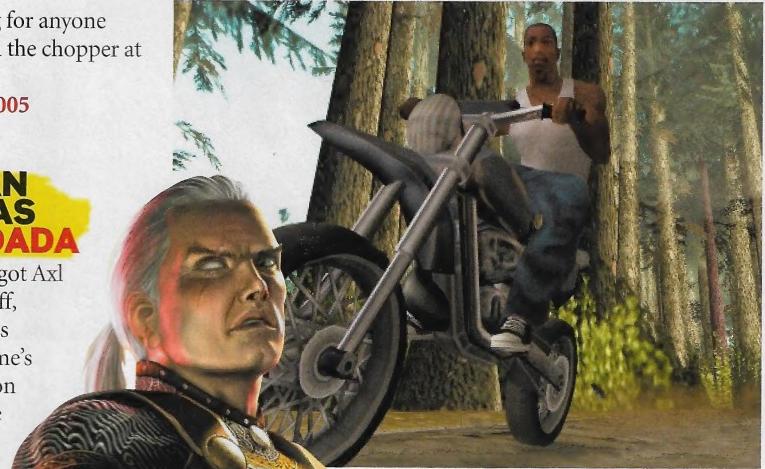
particularly interesting for anyone who happened to be in the chopper at the time. Go watch.

Official ETA March 2005
We say **So far so good**

5 GTA: SAN ANDREAS RADIO DADA

GTA: San Andreas has got Axl freaking Rose. The gruff, reclusive Guns 'n' Roses frontman hosts the game's classic rock radio station K-DST as Tommy 'The Nightmare' Smith. It shows you just how frighteningly powerful the GTA name has become: developers Rockstar can get a real rockstar, and one of the most unreachable people in the business, to lend his voice to it. Craig nearly bought a PS2 when he heard the news.

If that's not enough to get you twitchy, Public Enemy's abrasive lyric mangler Chuck D also makes an appearance. He hosts



classic hip-hop station Playback FM as DJ Forth Right MC.

If you can wait, the PC version will be out by the middle of 2005. Until then, why not buy the soundtrack to whet your appetite – it'll be available as an eight disc set, or a two disc compilation.

Official ETA May 2005
We say **On target**



6 F.E.A.R. FREEMAN FOLLOWERS

One of the many memorable things about *Half-Life* was the transparency of Freeman as a player character. No words were put in his mouth, no cut-scene demanded that he behave in a particular way. *F.E.A.R.*, we're told, runs on the same wavelength. The character you control is a cipher for your own actions. His personality and approach are all down to you.

We've also heard an interesting couple of gobbets of info on the support characters in your recon team. The sniper, Sun-Kwon, has superlative hearing and can pinpoint exactly where a person or threat is with just her ears. And Holiday, the demolitions expert, has psychic abilities. He can read events just by

YOUR MOST WANTED CHART

Console-ation gaming

Bungie's truly epic sci-fi FPS, *Halo*, is returning to Xbox this month, and gamers around the world are salivating at the thought. Even PC gamers. We all want it for our own systems. Do the right thing and announce it, Microsoft. *F.E.A.R.* has come back to haunt us for another month, and *Battlefield 2* is also starting to make a regular play for a chart position. And it was a touching moment when *EverQuest II* finally squeezed into the chart, given that this is both its first and last appearance. The game rolls out at roughly the same time this issue does. Better late, eh?

POSITION	GAME WANTED	VOTE SHARE	ETA
1 (6)	<i>Halo 2</i>	21%	2005
2 NEW	<i>Splinter Cell 3: Chaos Theory</i>	13%	March 2005
3 (4)	<i>Stalker</i>	13%	May 2005
4 (9)	<i>Battlefield 2</i>	12%	March 2005
5 (7)	<i>GTA: San Andreas</i>	11%	May 2005
6 (2)	<i>F.E.A.R.</i>	10%	Summer 2005
7 NEW	<i>EverQuest II</i>	8%	Out now
8 NEW	<i>Ghost Recon 2</i>	8%	Spring 2005
9 NEW	<i>Brothers in Arms</i>	2%	February 2005
10 NEW	<i>Championship Manager 5</i>	1%	December
NEAR MISS <i>Half-Life 3</i>		1%	Hah!



When Hull is full,
the dead will return
to walk the earth.

ONE TO WATCH

CITY OF THE DEAD

■ Publisher TBC ■ Developer Mercury Steam

Inspired by George Romero, helped along by American McGee, developed by Scraplands Mercury Steam, *City of the Dead* has a lot going on for it. So far, not much more has been revealed. All we know is that it's being pitched as the 'goriest game ever', and that it has some of the sexiest concept art we've ever seen. Not a lot to go on, but we're going with a zombie-based, survival of the fittest deal.

ing objects. It's details like these that suggest *F.E.A.R.* will have no off-the-mill script.

Official ETA Summer 2005

We say September, more like

7 EVERQUEST II HEATHER HONEY

A evident from the GTA: San Andreas story above, voices in games are big business. Ubisoft realise this, and have pummelled all kinds of talent into *EverQuest II*.

Christopher Lee lends his voice to the proceedings, as does Heather Graham, a woman with beautiful blue eyes that you can be lost in, swim in, etc. (What fool let Craig write Most of this month? – Ed).

70,000 lines of dialogue have been recorded. 1,700 voice actors have been used. All the more astonishing when you consider this is an MMORPG, a game where most conversation takes place in typed chat channels.

Official ETA Out now

We say Can't argue with that

Yup, Hull again.



The soldiers of *Brothers in Arms* hunt for Mark Knopfler in the long grass.

8 GHOST RECON 2 SINGULAR PUPPY

Ghost Recon is one of PC gaming's guilty pleasures. The solid, serviceable action and the tactical nuances are always worth a go. This release distances itself from the *Rainbow Six* series somewhat, however. It's more about long-range shooting and sniping for a start. And there's another item in *Recon's* kitbag.

Dubbed 'Lone Wolf', this multiplayer mode gives you a package of prototype military toys. Cameras that peek around corners, the ability to call in your own airstrike, etc. The mode gives one player all these, and sets the rest of the map against him. Whoever kills the Wolf gets the gear.

Official ETA Spring 2005

We say Sounds good to us



Baffled? You can always Ask The Colonel.

9 BROTHERS IN ARMS ASK THE COLONEL

No, not a new quiz show from the makers of *Question the Queen*. Instead it's developer Gearbox's brilliant way of answering all those fanboy questions about guns and khaki: pass them on to the military (retired). Colonel John Antal, of the US army, fields the obsessive questions that no developer should ever have to touch with a bargepole, and he does it with the authoratata that you'd expect from a professional soldier with a crushing handshake (we've met him). You can find the list of questions and answers at <http://diary.gearboxsoftware.com>. They make for... interesting reading.

Official ETA February 2005

We say The perfect Valentine's gift

10 CHAMP MAN 5 RUFF AT THE TOP

Our favourite new option in CM5 has to be the 'ruff up' option, when applied to a man-marking formation. It's used to show up the weaknesses of the opposition, and best executed using a man-mountain of a player. It encourages the selected player to go in with a bit of grit, determination and all the other things that English commentators have to say when the player is an untalented gorilla. 'Ave it!

Official ETA December

We say May yet slip

Eyewitness First Look

THE PUNISHER'S ENDS JUSTIFY THE MEANS BECAUSE...
He offs baddies with style. He wants to be the most violent game yet. It's going to be in all the newspapers (particularly the Daily Mail). You like to kill people.

THE PUNISHER

Would sir prefer the bullet? Or the woodchipper?

Le't just lay our cards down right now and point out that *The Punisher* shows the most horrific disregard for human life we've ever seen. Yes, every ten-penny action game is death-oriented, but even after you slay one of *Max Payne* 2's bad guys, you still secretly cling to the belief that, with the help of some talented doctors, a truckload of morphine and a zimmer frame, they might yet hobble away from it all. Not so here. It's pretty hard to walk, or indeed to live, after you've been sliced and diced by an industrial laser.

Despite the usual parade of third-person shooter hooks (shoot-dodges, dual wielding, cinematic-ish encounters), the comic book vigilante will make his videogame name not with standard combat but with his unique interrogation techniques. No, not sat round a table sipping coffee with

solicitors present, but while stamping on someone's head, or with his face inches from a bubbling deep fat fryer.

Any character can be grabbed and 'probed' for information, generally by threatening to feed their pink parts into everyday domestic appliances like sausage machines and wood-chippers.

Victims are broken by ruthless use of a 'struggle-o-meter'. While the Punisher forces fingers into a circular saw (for example), the subjects thrashings are measured by a needle on a bar. Use the mouse to keep the needle in the 'impending death' zone and your goon will sing. Let the pressure

ON THE DVD Punish yourself with a whole pile of shots on the disc > Galleries

drop and he'll clam up, but go too far and, well, things get messy. Of course, there's nothing to stop you pureeing bad guys once they've blabbed but that would just be sadistic, wouldn't it?

Add the chance to throw a grown man screaming into the jaws of a waiting anaconda, and this looks like just the kind of videogame controversy fodder that Trevor McDonald will love.

DUNCAN LEIGH

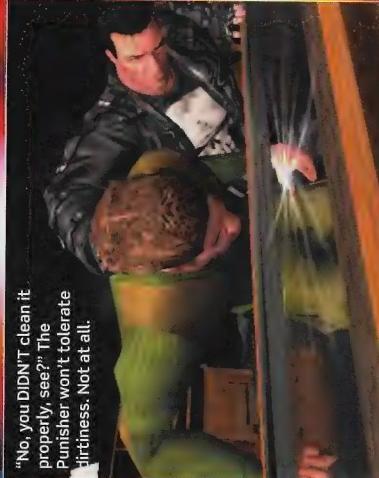
README

Publisher THQ
Developer Volition
ETA March 2005



DON'T TRY THIS!

You will be able to make out this guys entrails as they exit the woodchipper.





HL-2 steams up fans

Valve's anti-piracy plans alienate customers

Valve have angered their fans by forcing them to authenticate all versions of *Half-Life 2* online before they play.

"During installation the user will be prompted to authenticate the copy and create a Steam account," says Valve's Doug Lombardi. "After that is complete, the singleplayer and LAN games do not require an internet connection." This affects shop-bought versions and

means you have to hook your computer up to the internet and run Steam to validate the game on each computer, or you won't be able to play it.

Your Steam account binds the CD-key to your email

Jonathan Culberg, a PC GAMER forum user, told of the frustration many people face: "I do not have my games PC hooked up to the net. I have a separate PC for internet

and email because my ISP has a lovely habit of charging extra for each PC that gets hooked up to the net. I will either have to dismantle two PC rigs or

have another network connection put through and pay the extra."

There's another problem with the validation: when you create a Steam account it

binds the CD-key to your email address. If you buy a second-hand copy the CD-key will be bound to someone else's user account. You'll have to send it off to Valve to change it. It's one transatlantic parcel delivery and ten dollars admin fee before you can play the game you've purchased.

Valve neglected to comment when we asked how this would affect gamers' rights to sell or

return the game but a Gamestation insider (major high street game retailer) told us: "If the game's locked to a single email address then we won't be able to take it."

Inevitably, a number of fans will decide to look at the cracks that will appear on warez sites. Valve may have made their investment safe but they also run the risk of propelling disgruntled gamers towards the people they were trying to avoid.

SAY WHAT?

The month in tongues

Gabe Newell

"If we screw customers over, they will drop us like a hot potato. We could screw our customers and we could also go out to the parking lot, cover ourselves with gasoline and set ourselves on fire. Both seem like bad ideas." Cuddly Gabe responds to claims that you can only subscribe to *Half-Life 2* over Steam. Hmmm.

Brian Fargo:

"The Bard's Tale is a highly original game in the same category as *San Andreas*, *Half-Life 2* and *Halo 2* so we feel some sort of leak that sounds similar to what they have experienced may be the next logical step in our launch plans." nXile CEO Mr Fargo uses humour to make his point. Or do you really believe The Bard's Tale is on a par with *Half-Life 2*?

Hitman: Blood Money

Only titanium Aspirin can help

Pity agent 47. Not only is he the most conspicuous assassin ever, but someone's killing off his colleagues and he's lost contact with head office. Time to get a day job.

And so begins *Hitman: Blood Money*. 47's problems, while not as pressing as *Contracts'* bullet-in-the-gut scenario, are still the game's driving force. A larger, more powerful agency has entered the killer-for-hire market and it's steadily reducing his current employers, ICA, to a pile of bodybags. Cut off from everyone, 47 decides to go ahead with his latest hit.

but will he make it?

And without agency funding you'll have to conserve every penny – the route you take and your weapons depend on what you can afford.

README

Publisher Eidos
Developer Io interactive
ETA Spring 2005



The hunter becomes the hunted in the latest *Hitman* offering.

gobbets

Virtual Keyboard If your keyboard's anything like Mark Donald's, it'll have the remnants of forgotten societies jammed between the keys. Well, here's what you need: A virtual laser keyboard. How it works is far too complicated, except to say that goblins are involved and it's made of pure light. Get it here: www.vkb-tech.com





COMMENT Misogyny in the desert

SEXISM
HOW WOULD OTHER
PLAYERS
REACT WHEN
CONFRONTED WITH
A SEXIST BIGOT IN
A GAME?

They came from across the land, forming queues outside the Sinai Chariot shop, waiting patiently for the trader to display his wares. The players welcomed this new arrival, Malaki, eager to begin bartering for the rare souvenirs and fragile grape-vines on display. The first exchanges went smoothly, Malaki was polite, respectful. Then, he met a woman.

"Where is your master? I refuse to trade with you. I refuse to trade with slaves."

A Tale in the Desert is not a typical MMORPG. It's a social and political test. Players work together in building a civilisation. The game's designer, Teppy, takes a hands-off approach: he adds challenges but rarely gives guidance. This misogynist character was his latest test: a sexist AFK. How would players react?

Malaki was reviled as a thief and a liar. His behaviour was condemned: players who had completed trades returned the stolen goods. A pan-Egypt manhunt was organised to capture and return the scoundrel to Persia.

A manhunt was organised to capture and return the scoundrel to Persia

The developers faced the same revulsion. "This has ruined the game for me. I encounter enough sexism in RL," posted one player. "I am cancelling my account." "Butt the f*** out with your third grade sociology rat lab clustermuck psychodrama thought experiments," raged another.

Yes, this was an experiment. But so is much of *A Tale in the Desert*. Its players may not like to think of themselves as lab rats, but that's the truth. The players are building a virtual society, blazing a novel trail. Societies require an occasional prod or poke, a chance to define their core beliefs and principles.

Teppy deserves our respect and enormous credit for designing a test that allowed the players to unite. Games offer a new way of confronting political ideologies - through interaction. That's what *A Tale in the Desert* players do day in, day out. Yet, a subset of them refused to fight for their beliefs and quit.

That knee-jerk reaction threatens to derail other issue-based challenges and could end up impeding the range of online gaming. We pray that Teppy continues to challenge his players.



Rebels without a pulse

Stubbs of the dead

Wideload Games, formed from ex-Bungie staff, want you to die. *Rebel Without a Pulse* aims to reclaim the dead ground between the comedy gore of *Blood* and *Duke Nukem*.

You play as Stubbs the Zombie on a quest for

love and revenge in a utopian city, mired in rotting flesh. Traditional weapons take a back seat in favour of fleshy, self-inflicted wounds - you'll be able to thrust your own hand into your belly, flinging your own vital organs at encroaching

foes. Or you could fling your own hand into restricted areas, using it to feel your way through the most dastardly of puzzles.

Wideload have used the *Halo* technology to bring the futuristic city of Punchbowl to life. It's become infested with: mad scientists, militia men and the world's deadliest barber quartet have taken to the streets, armed with shotguns, rifles and tanks. That's nothing compared to Stubbs secret weapon: with one nibble, he can turn his foes into brain-addicted dead-heads.



Expect blood and guts. And lots and lots of it.

README

Publisher Aspyr Media
Developer Wideload Games
ETA 2005

gobbets

A giant frickin' lazer mouse ➤ But it doesn't cost one million dollars. Logitech are launching the MX1000, the World's first laser mouse. According to the company, it's got 20 times the tracking power of optical mice and can be used on a variety of different surfaces. Great, just as long as it doesn't cut a hole in the desk or get us banned at a concert.



So you're playing a MMORPG (or 'virtual world', as we academics call them), and you find a Hat of the Magi. Woot! A major artefact! Except, you already have a Hat of the Magi. What do you do?

Well, just the same as in any other RPG, you sell it. The NPC shopkeepers will always give you a wad of gold pieces for it, and (as it's a multiplayer RPG) if you go to the marketplace you may find a fellow PC who'll pay you even more. This is how virtual world economies work.

What if you could sell it for real money, though? Would you do it?

Well, plenty of people do. They go to eBay (category 1654), or to specialist sites such as www.ige.com or www.playerauctions.com, and sell their Hat of the Magi for \$189.88 (which is what this particular *Ultima Online* artefact is going for as I write). You're happy, the buyer is happy; what's not to love?

Imagine you're playing Monopoly with a couple of friends. The Scottie Dog lands on Income Tax and can't pay. You offer him £400 for Park Lane, but instead he sells it to the Old Boot for £1. Why? Because the Old Boot offered £1 of real money; you only offered £400 of Monopoly money. The Scottie Dog is happy, the Old Boot is happy; what's not to love?

Well, they just ruined the game for you, that's what.

It gets worse. Most high-ticket sales on these auction sites are for characters, not objects. The going rate for a Jedi on *Star Wars: Galaxies* is over \$1,000. So if you see a Jedi on SW:G, do you think, "Oh wow, how cool, that guy must be an awesome player!" or do you think, "There goes another rich kid"? And when you finally work your way up and become a Jedi yourself, what will people think of you?

If Bill Gates paid Paula Radcliffe a billion dollars for her world record, would that make him the fastest female marathon

runner in the world? No. World records are non-transferable.

For characters in virtual worlds to be in any way meaningful, they have to be non-transferable, too.

It gets even worse. Some of the players who sell these things are professional and organised. You want a particular scroll, but don't want to pay? You can't have it. The professionals have camped on the only source, and if you want to get hold of it then the only way is to go through them. Some individuals have 20+ computers running scripted bots simultaneously, 24/7, tying up their market.

But surely, isn't this merely scare-mongering? Isn't the buying and selling of virtual objects (or 'commodification', as we academics call it) just a minor ripple on the surface of the great virtual world ocean?

No, it's not.

The largest virtual worlds serve the Far East. Some of these number their players in the millions – over half the population of South Korea has, at some point, tried *Lineage*. Yet www.itembay.com is rumoured to make more money than all the developers of the virtual worlds it serves combined.

When the parasite is bigger than the host, you really have to worry...

Devil's Advocate

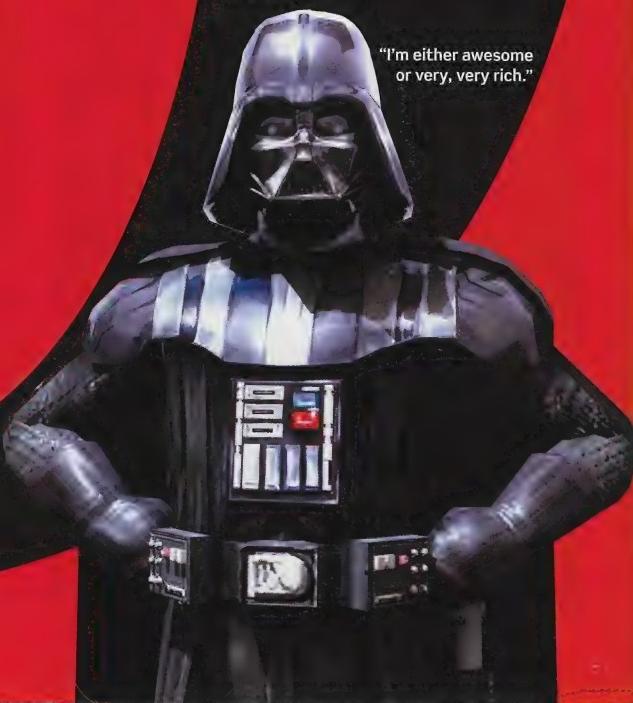
Money makes the (virtual) world go around, but is it compatible with fun?



PROF. RICHARD BARTLE
teaches computer game design at the University of Essex, where 25 years ago as a fresh-faced undergraduate he co-wrote the first ever virtual world, MUD. His recent book, *Designing Virtual Worlds*, is packed with wholesome design goodness.

Discuss this article at
<http://forum.pcgamer.co.uk>

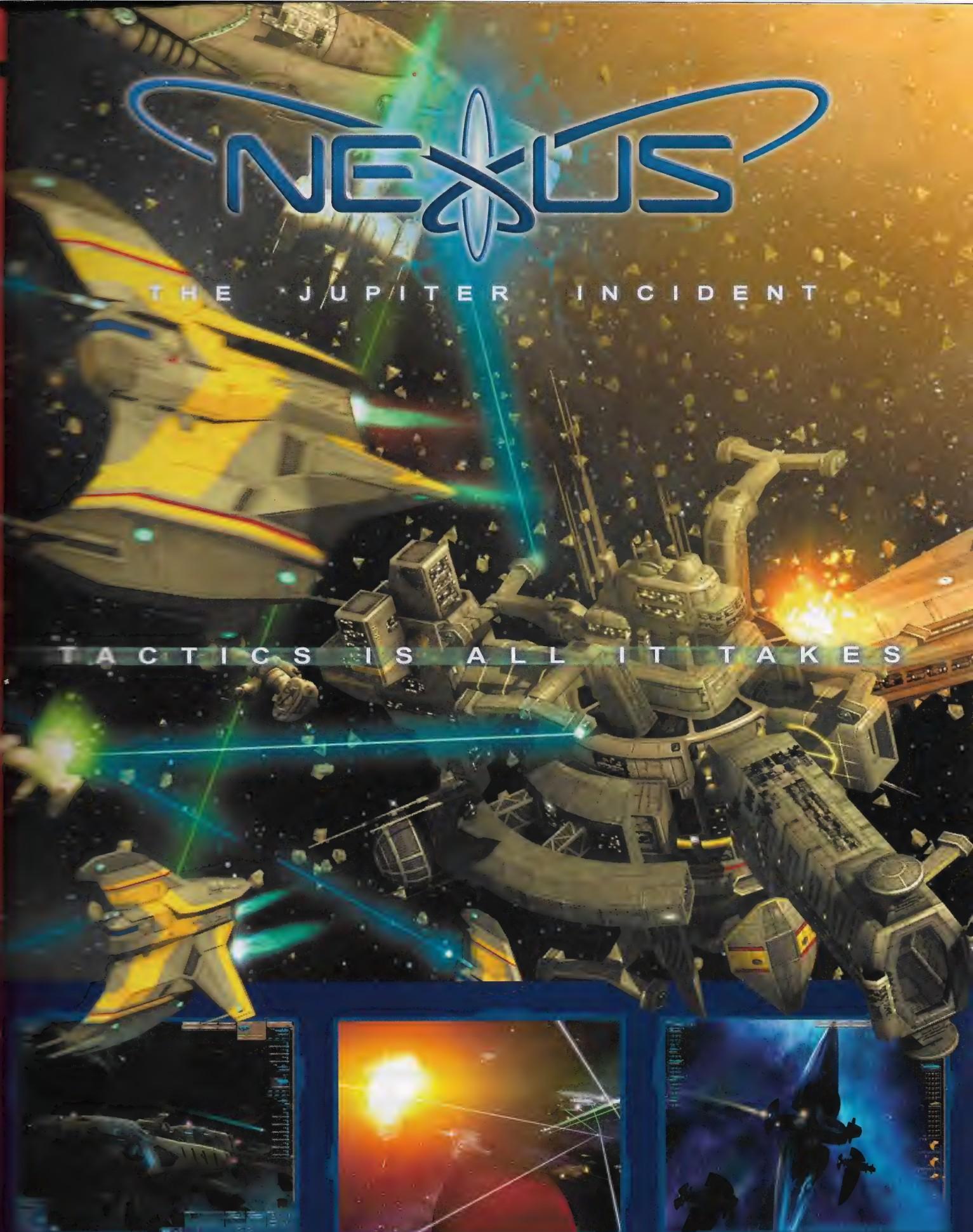
"I'm either awesome or very, very rich."



NEXUSTM

THE JUPITER INCIDENT

TACTICS IS ALL IT TAKES



Big campaign with 6 episodes and more than 26 thrilling missions

Diverse mission types: espionage, fight, stealth, sabotage, rescue, science, etc.

Spectacular real-time battles with breathtaking motion picture quality



PC
CD-ROM

SIERRATM

RELEASE
NOVEMBER 2004

www.NexusTheGame.com
www.vugames-europe.com



Nexus: The Jupiter Incident™ © 2004 HD Interactive BV. Developed by Mithis using the Black Sun 3D Engine. Published by HD Interactive BV. Nexus – The Jupiter Incident is a trademark of HD Interactive BV. HD Interactive and the HD Interactive logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of HD Interactive BV. Sierra and the Sierra logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of Sierra Entertainment, Inc. in the United States and/or other countries. Vivendi Universal Games and the Vivendi Universal Games logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Vivendi Universal Games, Inc. Mithis and the Mithis logo are trademarks of Mithis Entertainment Ltd. All other trademarks and logos are the property of their respective owners. All rights reserved.

Bargain Hunt

As cheap as chips and half as greasy

By the time you read this, the streets will be elbow to elbow with shoppers, fighting for space in the Christmas rush. If you're smart, you'll be doing your shopping online. But where do you start?

Assuming you know what you're looking for, a price comparison website should be your first stop. Kelkoo, Gamstracker or the new kid on the block

the price-range to search within. The best price we could find for *Battle for Middle-Earth* on Gamstracker was £25.89. The site also offers a free subscription service so you can sign up and set-up a watchlist to track the games you bookmark and email the prices to you on demand.

Sometimes with comparison sites, prices aren't all they seem.

Battle for Middle-Earth on Gamstracker was £25.89

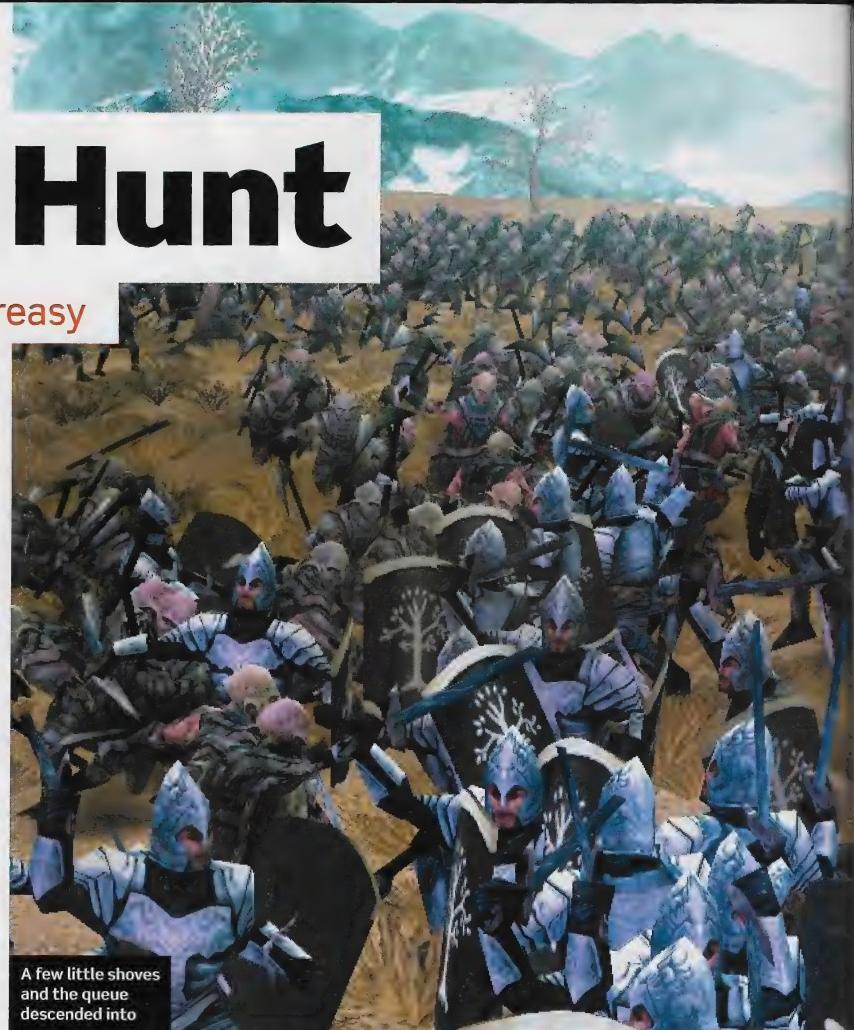
Froogle will be your best friends over the festive shopping season.

We'll use Gamstracker as an example. Gamstracker, as the name suggests is the only comparison site specifically set up for games. There's a clean interface, with links to categories, specific products and a search bar.

Price comparison sites work by searching the databases of all the websites they're linked to and then displaying the price, the buy link and the item. You can choose to list the prices from lowest to highest or customise

Gamstracker is one of the good ones because prices listed include postage and packing so you know exactly what you're paying out when you click their links. Some don't search the postage price so you'll end up having to add it when you get to the site.

If Gamstracker doesn't find something in your price range there are plenty of general sites. Visit Kelkoo and you can search for fridges and DVDs as well as games. Interestingly, we found *Battle for Middle-Earth* for even less – just £25.50, simply because of the



A few little shoves and the queue descended into

wider search database.

If someone, such as Play.com for example, has a reputation for selling cheap then there's no reason why you can't scour their database without using the comparison sites. We

found *BfME* at www.play.com,

a cheap and reputable seller, for £27.99. It's more expensive there, but the company have a long history of good service.

But where others have gone, Google inevitably

follows and improves beyond all measure. The shop searching site <http://froggle.google.co.uk> has just launched in the UK, and it's already proving popular. It doesn't do anything different but the uncluttered Google interface is highly customisable and a pleasure to use.

Once you find the product you're looking for, there's a 'compare price' link – click it and all the prices pop up. Froogle is still in its early stages but anything that helps with the pain of Christmas shopping can only be a good thing. Happy hunting.

THE UNDERGROUND



Bargain Buckets (<http://tinyurl.com/2a9c>) is a forum where users post links to deals they've dug up. Users here and at www.moneysavingexpert.com weed out super bargains, as well as Kelkoo-like cheapies and coupons. Mis-pricing or offers that shops haven't thought through pop-up and these guys know about it the minute it happens. A Dell computer was recently on Bargain Buckets for £106. Sometimes the shops pay out, sometimes they don't.

SEARCH ENGINE	WHERE	PRICE	VERDICT
Froogle	Play.com	£27.99 (Battle For Middle Earth)	Postage included, and it usually arrives in 3-5 days.
Kelkoo	www.mx2.co.uk	£25.50	The best price we found and includes p&p.
Gamstracker	www.simplygames.com	£25.89	Items posted within 2-3 days. Strong name.
Pricerunner	www.game.net	£27.99	The biggest name. You're paying for reliability.

gobbets

Half-Life 2 Arcade Yes, Japanese arcade giant Taito have announced they intend to bring *Half-Life 2* to the arcades by the middle of next year. Quite how it will work in an arcade is beyond even our enormous intellect. Intriguingly, they claim the game will have an online multiplayer, which it doesn't on the PC. It could just be *Counter-Strike Source*, but it's yet to be confirmed.



THE PC TOP 20 ||ChartTrack||

From 92% for *The Sims 2* all the way to the latest *Leisure Suit Larry*. Do us a favour and now. We promise to nab every mod we can as you make sure Larry and Gordon share the same chart. Please?

THE SIMS 2

Electronic Arts, PCG 92%

ROME: TOTAL WAR

Activision, PCG 95%

TOTAL CLUB MANAGER 2005

Electronic Arts, PCG 73%

WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR

THQ, PCG 91%

CALL OF DUTY: UNITED OFFENSIVE

Activision, PCG 82%

FIFA 2005

Electronic Arts, PCG 89%

STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT

Activision, PCG 60%

DOOM 3

Activision, PCG 90%

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 03/04

Eidos, PCG 83%

THE SIMS: TRIPLE DELUXE

Electronic Arts, PCG n/a

PACIFIC FIGHTERS

Ubisoft, PCG 86%

CALL OF DUTY: DELUXE EDITION

Activision, PCG n/a

TIGER WOODS PGA 2005

Electronic Arts, PCG 73%

AGE OF MYTHOLOGY: GOLD EDITION

Microsoft, PCG n/a

FLIGHT SIM 2004: A CENTURY OF FLIGHT

Microsoft, PCG 90%

LMA MANAGER 2005

Codemasters, PCG 47%

GTA: VICE CITY

Rockstar, PCG 93%

LEISURE SUIT LARRY: MAGNA CUM LAUDE

Mimendi, PCG 3%

CSI: DARK MOTIVES

Ubisoft, PCG 56%

FAR CRY

Ubisoft, PCG 91%

FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR THQ, PCG 76%

Illustrations by David Lyttleton

King Kong

It was pixel shaders that killed the beast

The biggest ape in history is coming to your PC, courtesy of Sir Rayman. Michael Ancel, the mind behind the 'armless' platform series and, more recently the touching *Beyond Good and Evil*, is to work with Lord of the Rings director Peter Jackson on this videogame adaptation of *King Kong*.

Two of the most creative minds in their respective industries coming together on one project? That's exciting.

This project is uniquely suited to Ancel. His

previous work in *Beyond Good and Evil* was marked by an outsider feel – the hero Jade, preferred the company of a bulbous pig, Peyj over the handsome rebel soldier Double-H. In *King Kong*, the depressed entertainer Carl Denham travels to a remote island to find a showpiece for his dying circus. Kong of course is the ultimate reject, too big for his boots, far too big for the Big Apple.

The film has more than enough material to make for some action-packed gaming entertainment.

While the ultimate dream would be to play as the ill-fated monkey (Crush! Smash! Snuggle!) we expect that adventurer Jack Driscoll will take centre stage, exploring the Skull Island jungles, tracking down the gorilla, before saving his beloved Ann Darrow from the cheeky monkey's clutches.

You could round it all off with a bi-plane monkey defence mini-game. Think big.

README

Publisher Ubisoft
Developer In-house
ETA November 2005

TRENDS

Electioneering

Jump on the bandwagon with the games that defined the election race**FRONTRUNNER 04**

An all-encompassing political sim. You set up a presidential campaign with your favoured candidate, choose the issues you'll fight on according to your own political bent (if you so wish) then spend the next 99 days electioneering. Go fundraising, hit the chat show circuit, book into the Watergate... well, maybe not that last one. www.lanterngames.com/

FLIP-FLOP POLITICS

Bush's very own Kerry bashing game. A basic guess-the-answer affair, each question is designed to prove Kerry's a dirty stinking liar. You have to guess Kerry's response to questions and the results show off the contradictory answers he gave. Hosted on Dubya's own site, it's only available in America so we're linking to a mirror site. <http://tinyurl.com/5zrgf>

POWERPOLITICS III

You're a campaign manager setting out the route for your candidate to follow. Boasting a raft of statistical analysis from the previous 30 years, as well as the chance to run through all the previous elections, *Powerpolitics III* will let you weed out the despots from the teapots. Register for free at:

www.powerpolitics.us/home.htm

PRESIDENTIAL KNOCKOUT

When you've had enough of the grinning, leathery faces of the two candidates you can resort to some good old-fashioned violence. Ignore the issues, strategies and adverts, pick who you hate and then spend as long as you like bloodying up their face with Tyson-like rage. www.miniclip.com/knockout.htm

THIS IS HARDCORE

A fistful of genres



THIS IS...

FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS

I'm a simple man. Games that over complicate

matters get a short shrift from me. "But where's the crosshair?" might as well be my catchphrase, given my love for FPSing the night away. Oddly enough, the only time I ever held a real gun, I was so scared I vowed never to touch one ever again.

Why am I divulging this? Well, it's because *Commandos*, a series my aversion has condemned to the bottom of my playpile, has only gone and turned FPS.

Commandos: Strike Force, seems like a perfect stopping-off point between the top-down originals, and the excellent but complicated WWII shooter *Hidden & Dangerous*.

What remains from the old *Commandos* games? Well, there are three character classes, the Green Beret, The Spy and the Sniper. The game has you sticking a spanner into the Nazi war machine, using each character's abilities to your advantage.

Headshot Hitler

But this time around it's in glorious 3D, with proper depth of field and crosshairs. You can directly control any member of the group, and it's all about planning and executing the mission. There's even a multi-player mode being discussed, although there's nothing concrete coming from Pyro on that front.

Will this be the shot in the arm the series needs, or are we looking at a *C&C: Renegade* style mess-



Just so long as there are lots of Germans running around shouting "Schnell!"

up? Only time, and the lethal fingers of GAMER's own FPS 'expert', will tell.

Going commando? Contact Craig at craig.pearson@futurenet.co.uk



THIS IS...

ONLINE

What a month for *Warhammer Online* fans. First we got our mitts on

Dawn of War, then we get confirmation that *Warhammer Online* is still alive. Developers Climax, having had their wings clipped by Games Workshop's bank manager earlier in the year, have kept their creation on life support and are now making plans for a full resurrection. Of course there's no target date set as yet, and the publisher remains a mystery, but Sega are almost certain to be out of the equation.

An opportunity for online publishers there then, while the big MMORPG developers will be monitoring the relationship between LucasArts and Sony Online. Rumour has it that the forthcoming *Jump to Lightspeed* expansion will mark the end of their partnership and that Lucas will look elsewhere to expand their online Star Wars empire. Maybe the player teleportation



incident was the straw that broke the Bantha's back.

Shiva and shake

Having swapped mining duties in *Galaxies* for those in *EVE Online* I'm quaking with excitement over the free *Shiva* expansion. *EVE's* been setting records for concurrent users and with the expansion adding player space stations and instanced dungeons it's a good time to turn to *EVE's* charms again. Expect a review of *Shiva* next month along with *EverQuest 2* which is about to go live as my ink dries.

Ore need refining? Contact Mark at mark.sutherns@futurenet.co.uk

THIS IS...

SIMULATION

Rockstar North aren't the only ones who've been cruising Cali freeways lately in the name of games research. Russia's Softlab NSK have, since 2001, covered 10,000 kms of Golden State blacktop resource-gathering for their upcoming trucking sim *Rig'n'Roll*.

Due out next May, and with an official site that has just gone live (www.rignroll.com) the game promises a buttock-numbing blend of long-distance driving, smokey evasion, and commerce that will be instantly familiar to fans of the studio's last 18-wheeler recreation *King of the Road* (PCG111, 76%). What the PC semi set won't have sampled



before is the vast reality-based environment *RnR* offers (a condensed version of California) or the significantly bolstered levels of vehicle realism.

Frigate birds

Another group of simmers in for some horizon-broadening soon are submariners. *Sub Command* (PCG104, 79%) sequel, *Dangerous Waters*, recently signed by *Combat Mission* publisher Battlefront, will allow vitamin D-deficient seamen to spread their wings, providing flyable Seahawk helos and Orion patrol aircraft in addition to the more predictable periscope platforms. If the leap from hydroplanes to planes is too radical for some salts, then there's also a usable US missile frigate to help keep the claustrophobia at bay. Plumb www.scs-dangerouswaters.com for more details.



Tim 'Little Buddy' Stone

Smokeys on your tail? Contact Tim at pcgamer@futurenet.co.uk

**THIS IS...**

STRATEGY/MANAGEMENT

Nothing is as tantalising as a good WWII 'what if?' scenario. What if the Germans had won the Battle of France at Dunkirk? What if the Japanese had won the Battle of Midway? What if the Allies had won the Battle of Stalingrad? What if the Soviets had won the Battle of Berlin? What if the Allies had won the Battle of the Bulge? What if the Allies had won the Battle of the Atlantic? What if the Allies had won the Battle of the Pacific? What if the Allies had won the Battle of the Mediterranean? What if the Allies had won the Battle of the Atlantic? What if the Allies had won the Battle of the Pacific? What if the Allies had won the Battle of the Mediterranean?

Britain and France fare if they tried to encircle large Russian armies in 1941? *HoI2* licences players to engineer their own 'what if' stunts because it's liberated from the pre-scripted historical events that restricted the first game. The sequel also aims to streamline the original's obtuse interface that left some



feeling like they were fighting the game rather than the War.

HoI sin sauce

But the essential *HoI* character is left intact. You make the decisions that change the course of the war. Shaping the economic and political character of a nation; ordering divisions into battle – but you don't fight the battle. Yours are the higher concerns. Securing oil supplies, ordering research into nuclear weapons, and pinning a shiny medal on Rommel's chest when he captures Stalingrad.

Parley like it's 1939 with Mark at
mark.donald@futurenet.co.uk

**THIS IS...**

ODDBALL

The first user to register on the PC GAMER forum was called, simply, Avatar. It's a name that should resonate for all gamers. In our world, the term emerged from the massively multi-player realms but is increasingly used by gamers to describe their character within any game. "My avatar's got great legs. +3 agility, in fact."

Naturally the origins of the word are grander still. In Hinduism, the term *avatar* implies immortal descent. Avatars are earthly manifestations of God, put here for divine purposes, such as Krishna or Rama. Hindu's believe that when evil rises and good declines, an *avatar* will appear on the Earth.

**Ross 'Level 42' Atherton****THIS IS...**

RPG/ADVENTURE

Adventure gaming is not dead. Mind you, we've been told since *Grim Fandango*. We bear positive news of the resurrection of *canned Sam & Max*. There's even talk that an indie European



publisher is already in talks with the developers to publish it in the UK. More soon, we hope.

Bioware have always had the right to sell fan-made content for *Neverwinter Nights*. They're finally taking that plunge by selling some modules that have been at least in part made by the massive fan community, including the impressive *Kingmaker* (pictured), for just a few quids each. Head to store.bioware.com for more.

Bad dates

I've been playing the *World of Warcraft* European beta like a

crazy man. It's ace. It'll be out in the States by the time you read this, but we'll have to wait until (my spies tell me) about February for the European release. However, there'll be a wider Euro beta before then, so keep your eyes on en.wow-europe.com for more details. Assuming they'll let us onto the US server, we'll bring you a review of this highly polished MMORPG next issue.

Moved to Stormwind? Email Ross at
ross.atherton@futurenet.co.uk

Buddah system

Which is where we find the game connection. In the *Ultima* series, *Avatar* was the player character, doomed/blessed with the task of saving Britannia from a recurring evil. The *Avatar* embodied a set of eight virtues: honesty, compassion, valour, justice, sacrifice, honour, spirituality and humility. Richard Garriot, *Ultima*'s creator, partly based this code of morality on the Eightfold path of Buddhism.

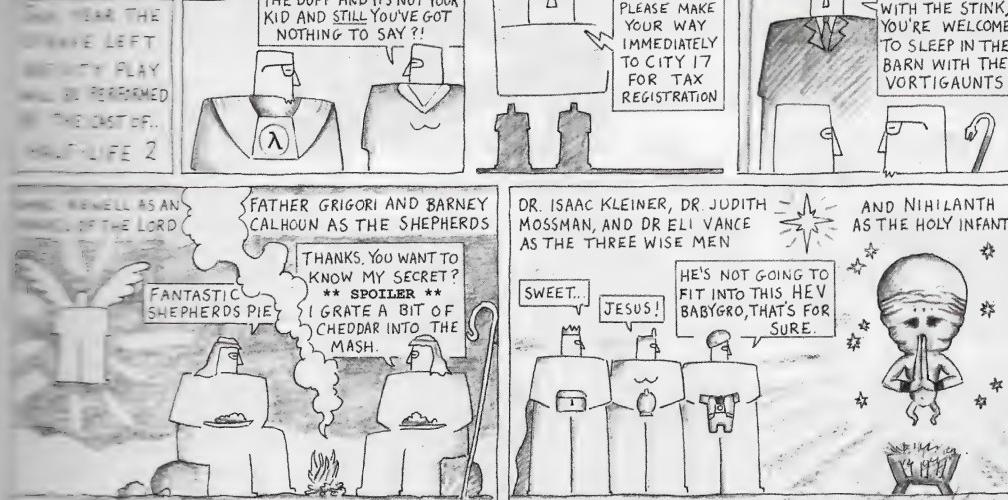
Then, Neal Stephenson, the author of the cyber-punk classic *Snow Crash*, gave *avatar* its current meaning. He created the idea of the meta-verse, a virtual-reality construct created for business and pleasure. Your *avatar* in *Snow Crash* was your personal representation.

Certain avatars carried social stigmas – if you couldn't afford a high-quality body, then you'd be regarded as an outcast. "You're ugly. -12 charisma."



Seeking enlightenment? ask Tim at
tim.edwards@futurenet.co.uk

SIRAFE LEFT

BY TIM STONE

Rumours of **Warhammer Online**'s death have been greatly exaggerated. Climax have been busy working on both the game and the engine in the months since we were told it was all over. Karl Jeffrey, CEO of Climax, said: "Work on the game continued apace. We are also continuing to develop the underlying technology and toolset to allow us to create other MMOs going forward."

The engine will remain in Climax's grasp so they can create other properties, but they've managed to retain the rights and Game Workshop's support for *Warhammer Online*.

"We're working very closely with Games Workshop to ensure the rights to *Warhammer* are protected at all times and any game under that banner is to the highest quality possible," Karl explained. The game's future is starting to look a whole lot brighter and you can expect to see it making an appearance in a year to a year-and-a-half's time.

The Spy will be passing his dossier to PC GAMER.

Now Bungie have released *Halo 2* to the fans, there's time to take stock and think about their next game. It won't be set in the circular universe, though, as the developers want to distance themselves from that for the time being.

Rumours suggest Bungie's next project could be **Phoenix**, a non sci-fi shooter the team were working on before development started on *Halo 2*.

Or it could be a reprisal of their **Marathon** series, although the similarities with the Master Chief's masterpiece suggest they probably won't return to that for the time being.



Pssst! It's...

The Spy

...once she brought out a large bottle of baby oil and a knobbly potato, The Spy made his excuses and left.

The Spy's contact details are included within this sentence.



With Valve using up their bandwidth servicing us with *Half-Life 2*, you'd think they'd have quite enough on their plates. But no, The Spy has snatched secret blueprints from under their noses (well, alright – they left them in the toilet and The Spy had to go)

which reveal they're currently working feverishly on the next **CS: Source** update.

Due some time in December we're expecting to see more classic maps including *de_prodigy*, two new player models and one brand new map. This is part of the reason Valve

introduced Steam: constant, after-sale updates. Not too shabby.

The tenuous link of them both being online games brings The Spy to his next discovery: there's a **Hello Kitty** MMO in production.

Currently slated for the Asian market, it's a sedate,

calming game where you build houses, make friends and absolutely do not kill anyone. You even get to raise pets. Check out www.sanriotown.com/onlinegame if **Animal Crossing** online sounds like your sort of thing:

Speaking of pets, a University of Florida scientist has cultured rat brain cells and created a "brain" that can control a flight sim. If the image of a petri dish playing **MS Flight Sim 2004** disturbs you, write in and tell Mark Donald. Word has it he's on the lookout for a couple of cheap staff writers, and Tim and Craig are getting worried.

The Spy will let you know if they manage to survive the next month. Spy out.

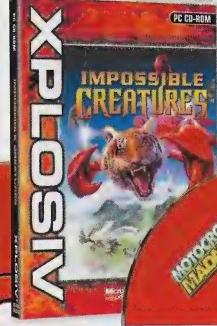
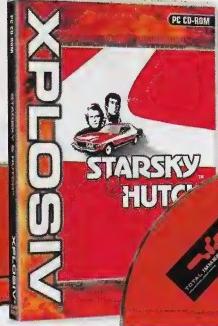
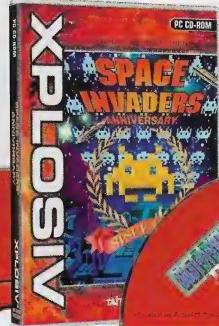
HAVE A **DOUBLE THIS XMAS**
ON **XPLOSIV...**



Free game CD in Xplosiv special edition packs.

Thirty top titles including new releases on sale in stores nationwide from November 2004.

Promotion ends 31st December 2004



LESSONS IN LOVE

Special Report

Can Emotioneering help create games we *really* care about?

Love it or hate it, the quest to make games more emotional won't go away. The industry wants to challenge Hollywood, remember, while even the dedicated gamer can only sneak down so many corridors or rescue so many generously-proportioned heroines before asking an inevitable, "What is the point of it all?"

Can games be as moving as movies? Or will attempts always get bogged down in cinematics, and conversation trees that would challenge the patience of an AI during a Turing Test?

David Freeman says there's hope. Freeman, a screenwriter turned games industry revolutionary, is the inventor of Emotioneering, a set of techniques that makes playing with our heartstrings more an engineering task than the preserve of poets. If you want the mystery taken out of romance and the A-Z of empathy revealed, then Emotioneering is for you. Particularly if you want to put it back into a game.

Of course, many games have moved us in unusual ways *Call of Duty* and *The Sims*, say. But more usually the emotions stirred are

excitement, fear and maybe a reluctant guilt at having been up all night. And what's wrong with that?

Well, while gamers and even developers pay lip service to a hardcore creed, they continue to favour action/adventure, first-person and stealth titles with an obvious real world bent. We're asking for reality. The trouble is ever more realistic-looking game characters are equally ever more unsatisfying if they just run at you like the rotting undead.

What's more, it's argued that non-gamers – still most of the

scriptwriting course he teaches called Beyond Structure. As the most popular course in LA (impressive in a city where even hamburgers are served up with lines) Beyond Structure also attracted game developers. One was Shiny Entertainment's CEO Dave Perry, who asked Freeman to polish the script of *Enter the Matrix*. He did, although little of the work apparently survived the later involvement of the Wachowski brothers. But the seed was sown, and Freeman had gone interactive.

The result, several months of

Playing with our heartstrings is more an engineering task than the preserve of poets

world – aren't going to bother with games until they're offered the tear jerking of Jerry McGuire or the patriotic rush of Chariots of Fire. Yes, you're thinking, you've experienced that in games – but any gamer who says he feels those emotions most often in games isn't watching enough bad daytime TV, let alone the likes of Schindler's List.

Freeman got the idea for Emotioneering from a Hollywood

game-playing later, was 'Creating Emotion in Games: The Art and Craft of Emotioneering' – among the biggest selling books at this year's Game Developers Conference. In it Freeman lists more than 300 Emotioneering techniques (from a pool of 1,500) divided into 32 categories, and explains how to apply them.

Need to transform your villagers from smelly cannon fodder into salt-of-the-earth



citizens in peril? Reach for a 'Player Towards NPC Chemistry Technique' (perhaps by charging the player with protecting the village-idiot-with-hidden-wisdom from the local ruffians). Want the gamer to be more arsed about descending into the dungeon? Time for a 'Role Induction Technique' (what if the village idiot reveals to his new favourite hero that the hero's parents were last seen being





Soon character interaction will not involve the wooden acting of a Danielle Steel straight-to-TV movie.

...walking into that... before the dungeon... was sealed by a landslide?) ...as much that the actual... in their own are new. ...doesn't claim they are... post-mortems *Thief*, ...several other games... how they tick. ...main goal is to impose... onto the emotional... Emotioneering is... more like science than

art. By layering Emotioneering a technique at a time, developers can build up engaging worlds and plots, just as they use textures, 3D models and game engines to build the environment.

It needn't even involve any dialogue. For instance, Emotioneering introduces Usable Symbols – perhaps a favourite scarf that an NPC gives to the adventurer when he sets off, that catches fire in a particularly combustible dragon attack, but that is magically repaired later on at some key point in the plot. The game never even draws attention to the scarf; but subconsciously players will make the link.

This engineering approach is very game developer friendly. Freeman has spoken at conferences in the UK, and his articles have appeared in magazines. He's being paid to put Emotioneering into practice – his five-man company has worked on some 17 games already, but Freeman says the most emotionally charged ones are yet to come. 3D Realms' Scott Miller, Ion Storm's Warren Spector, and

Sony Online Entertainment's Raph Koster have all praised his work. Will Wright of Maxis wrote the book's forward.

By now you're either sceptical or excited. Certainly Freeman's game CV to date – which at best features the likes of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and *Van Helsing* – might not inspire a revolution. But in nearly all those cases he was called in late to polish the script. The true test will be the upcoming games – unnamed projects with 3D Realms and Sony as well Atari's graffiti-fest *Getting Up*.

But however these projects play out, his book has already changed developers thinking about emotion, and that will change the games we play. "3D Realms has jumped on Freeman's Emotioneering techniques like a rooster in a hen house," is how Scott Miller put it.

So if you're playing a game in years to come and you don't know whether to laugh or cry, at least you'll know where to send your Kleenex bill.

OWAIN BENNALLACK

Deus Ex Emotiona

Freeman wasn't involved in *Deus Ex II: Invisible War*, but we have detected several Emotioneering techniques at work...



BILLIE'S GENES As a fellow graduate of the Tarsus Academy, Billie has much in common with you (Emotioneering term: 'Group Bonding Techniques'). If you turn against her, will you fight her? ('Emotionally Complex Situations').



A DOG'S LIFE The hounds are pretty dumb. But their machine-like voices take them beyond mere walking gun mounts ('Dialogue Interesting') that hints at their potential redundancy in a bio-modified world ('Plot Deepening').



OMAR TO YOU The Omar's look reflects conflicts of bio-modification ('Plot Deepening') and they sell the war's cause, bio-mods ('Usable Symbols'). The Omar are also involved in their own battles ('NPC Deepening').



CHIT CHAT Flirty banter makes NG Resonance much more than a mere mission dispenser ('Player Toward NPC Chemistry').



KILLING JOKE Real emotion may demand more reality. The Order giving us missions despite us executing their acolytes just causes disillusion.



Escape from the Ordinary



"Absolutely stunning" Xbox Magazine

Available on PC December 2004 with exclusive content

16+
TM

www.pegi.info



SIERRA™



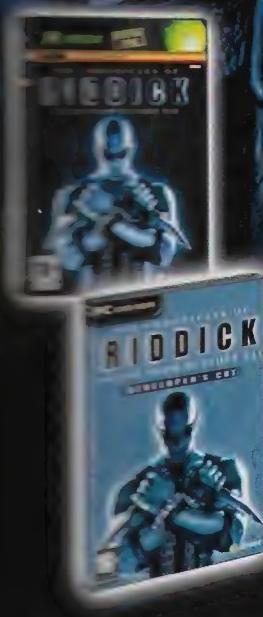
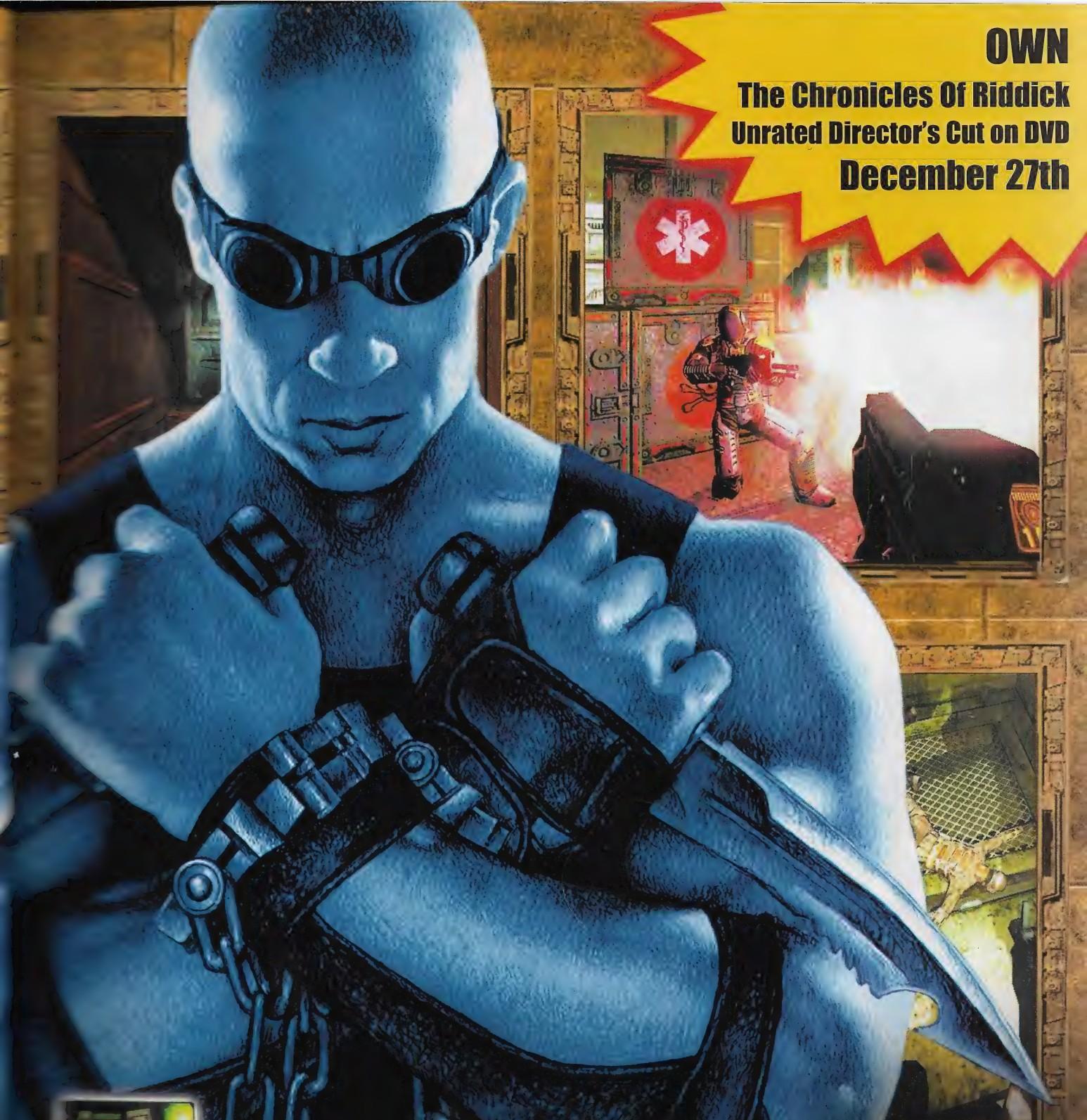
"The Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay" interactive game © 2004 Vivendi Universal Games, Inc. All Rights Reserved. "The Chronicles of Riddick"™ & © Universal Studios. Licensed by Universal Studios Licensing LLLP. All Rights Reserved. Vivendi Universal Games and the Vivendi Universal Games logo are trademarks of Vivendi Universal Games, Inc. © 2004 Sierra and the Sierra Logo are trademarks or registered trademarks in the U.S. and/or other countries of Sierra Entertainment, Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of Vivendi Universal Games, Inc. The Starbreeze Engine Technology © 2002-2004 Starbreeze AB. All rights reserved. The Starbreeze Logo is a trademark of Starbreeze AB. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox Live, the Live logo, and the Xbox logos are registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries. All other trademarks are property of their respective owners.

OWN

The Chronicles Of Riddick

Unrated Director's Cut on DVD

December 27th



Available on DVD
December 27th

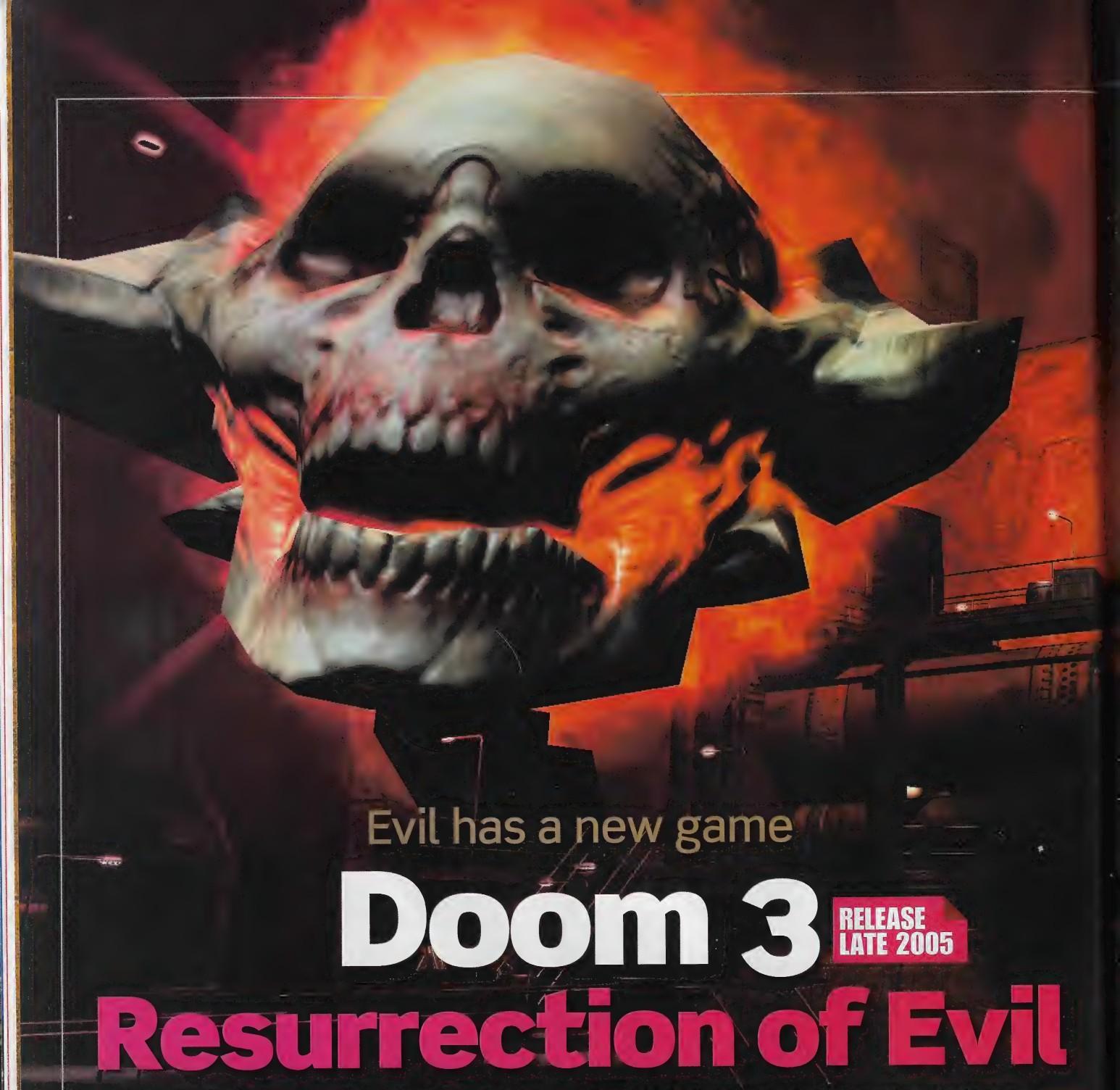
You are Riddick, the most wanted man in the universe, in an original story set before the events in Universal Pictures' *The Chronicles of Riddick* (starring Vin Diesel), and the breakout hit *Pitch Black*, which first introduced the enigmatic anti-hero Riddick. Make a dramatic escape from Butcher Bay, the galaxy's deadliest prison, in this intense fusion of first-person shooter, fighter, and stealth adventure.

THE CHRONICLES OF

R I D D I C K

ESCAPE FROM BUTCHER BAY

www.riddickgame.com



Evil has a new game

Doom 3

RELEASE LATE 2005

Resurrection of Evil

Humankind is essentially a bit stupid. We keep on making the same old mistakes: starting wars, picking scabs, drinking strangely coloured booze... schoolboy errors, really. But something in our genetic make-up says, "Hey, I know we unleashed the forces of hell and nearly wiped out mankind last time, but, well, it couldn't go wrong twice, could it?"

The existence of an expansion for *Doom 3* was never going to be an astonishing revelation. And nor is the announcement

that, once again, you'll be fighting the minions of Satan rather than, say, leather-clad Nazis. So why the cover? Why the excitement? Well, for a couple of reasons. We'll come to them in a minute. But first: just who the devil are you?

One thing's for sure: you're not the marine who went to hell and back in the main game. It's not quite clear what

happened to him – perhaps he was pensioned off and went to live on a ranch in Montana (although it seems more likely he's been crouched in a pool of stale piss, rocking back and forth

in a padded cell, since returning from his exploits). In fact, you play a 'combat engineer' – a phrase we don't think means you go around organising fights. Although Nerve Software, who previously worked with id on *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*, are behind the meat of the expansion, id are still in creative control, so we leapt out on them from a darkened cupboard and pressed them for more details.

"After *Doom 3* finishes in an epic battle with the Cyberdemon at the Hell Hole in November 2145, the UAC holds a news conference and reports their

research post on Mars was destroyed by a reactor malfunction and that no one has survived," reveals an evidently excited Matt Hooper of id Software. "Five months later, a

UAC orbital probe receives a faint, unidentified signal originating from the Site 1 location on Mars – which was thought to be a dead site.

"In August of 2146, UAC scientist Dr Elizabeth McNeil, leading expert on the ancient Martian civilisation, is sent to Mars to re-open the Erebus complex and lead a team in discovering what is emitting ►

THE PITCH

More devilish minions, more mad scientists, more gibbering terror and more gibs. Bring it on!

But first:
just who
the devil
are you?



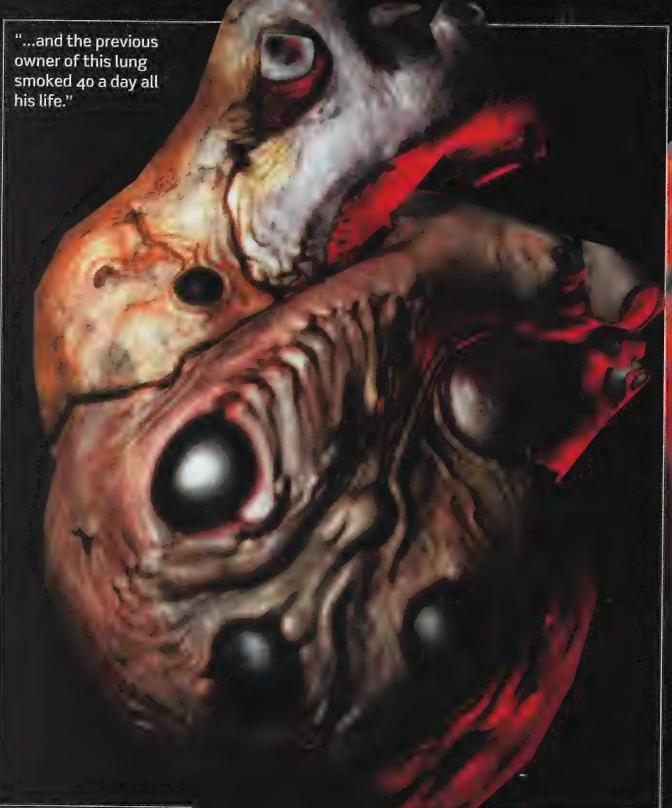
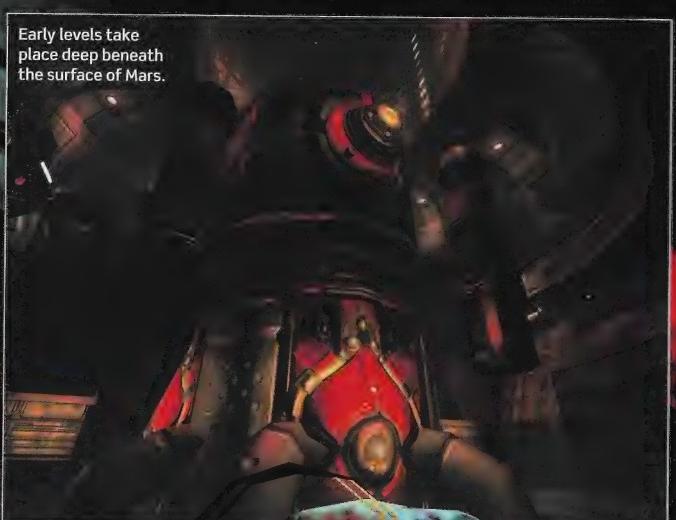
FATAL ATTRACTION

Not all weapons spit lead

Perhaps the most exciting addition to the *Doom 3* formula is the Ionized Plasma Levitator, or Grabber. Not a direct weapon as such, it can be used to pick up or 'catch' objects as large as barrels, enabling you to stack objects to clamber higher, return hurled fireballs or even repel small enemies. Do say: Wow, that'll open up all sorts of interesting physics-based interactions! Don't say: Hey, isn't there one of those in *Half-Life 2*?



Early levels take
place deep beneath
the surface of Mars.



You are a... in a large... sent to the... to both protect... eye on Dr McNeil. In March 2147, the Site 1... is opened and the... of the signal, a... Evil Artefact, is... Led this time by Dr... who is now fully... Hell is unleashed... to hunt down and... the Evil Artefact, which... species we should be... birth... happen the... Do not... evil... Do not... evil... Doom 3's... locations was the... ruins being... by UAC deep beneath... Resurrection of... begin in these dusty... where you first come... with the critical... carved monoliths... the harsh lights and... of human archaeology... there, you'll progress... through Site 1 – the... UAC's first Mars... and then through the... labs. Here, you'll meet... friend and one old one:

Multiplayer will also get a lick of paint

them. From the first you get the cutely titled 'Hell-time' – you move normally, but the world around you is slowed down.

Resurrection of Evil will throw three new beasts your way, in addition to the three 'boss' hunter demons. The Vulgar is similar to the ubiquitous Imp but is even faster, and tends to lurk, crawl and then leap at you. The Bruiser is the heavyweight horror the name suggests: with two cannons for arms, it deals and can take massive punishment. The Forgotten

the former is the boss, Dr McNeil. But the latter is the good old double-barrelled shotgun, one of the two new weapons alongside the Ionized Plasma Levitator (see page 29).

New shooters are all very well, but *Resurrection of Evil* has more tricks up its sleeve than that. Although facing down Dr Betruger in Hell itself will be your ultimate battle, he sends out three powerful demons to hunt you down before you ever get there. After defeating the first of these, you'll realise that the artefact you're carrying is more than a bauble: it enables you to gain the supernatural powers of these super-monsters once you defeat

The detail of monster design remains at the incredible peaks reached in *Doom 3*.



closely resembles the Lost Soul from *Doom 3*; a flaming, flying skull that'll test your accuracy and reactions.

Multiplayer will also get a lick of paint. Support for eight players on a map will be officially added (better late than never), Haste and Invulnerability will be included

in the power-up roster and an inevitable slew of new maps will also appear.

If you're an old *Doom* hand, you'll probably have twigged by now that *Doom 3: Resurrection of Evil* is acting almost like a remake of *Doom II* (by comparison to *Doom 3*'s remake of *Doom*). Developers Nerve ➤

Just as with *Doom II*, the double-barrelled shotgun will be introduced. Gamers will have nightmares about its long reload time.





Implements from TV series *Nip/Tuck* make a surprise appearance.

The devil's a traditionalist when it comes to interior design. It's horror-gothic all the way, and no chintz.

and id in particular are clearly obsessed with re-creating their past glories with today's technologies, perhaps to the detriment of some elements. The reappearance of the double-barrelled shotgun is a kind of id signature, but it's good to know they're open to new ideas, such as the creativity-inspiring Grabber gun.

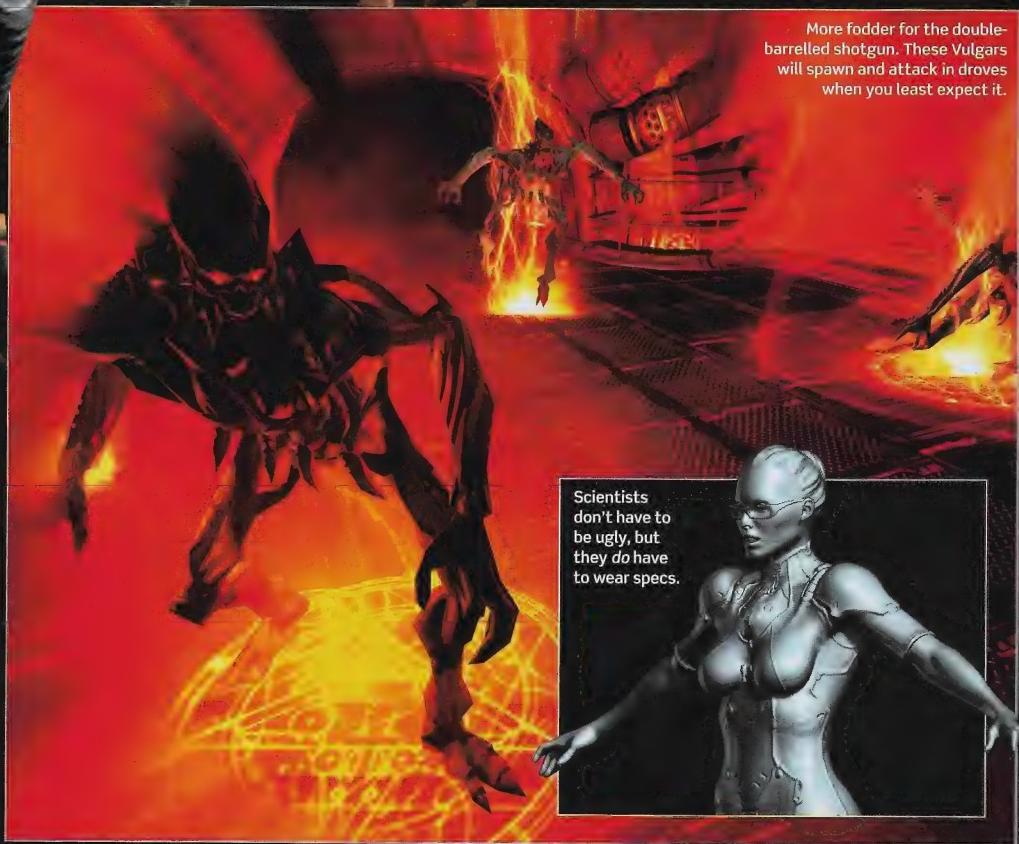
Doom 3 split the gaming world on its arrival this summer; you either loved it or hated it. With much more of the same promised, it doesn't look like *Resurrection of Evil* will do much to change people's opinions. But then id have never seemed terribly concerned by what other people think. After all, hell is other people...

ROSS ATHERTON

README

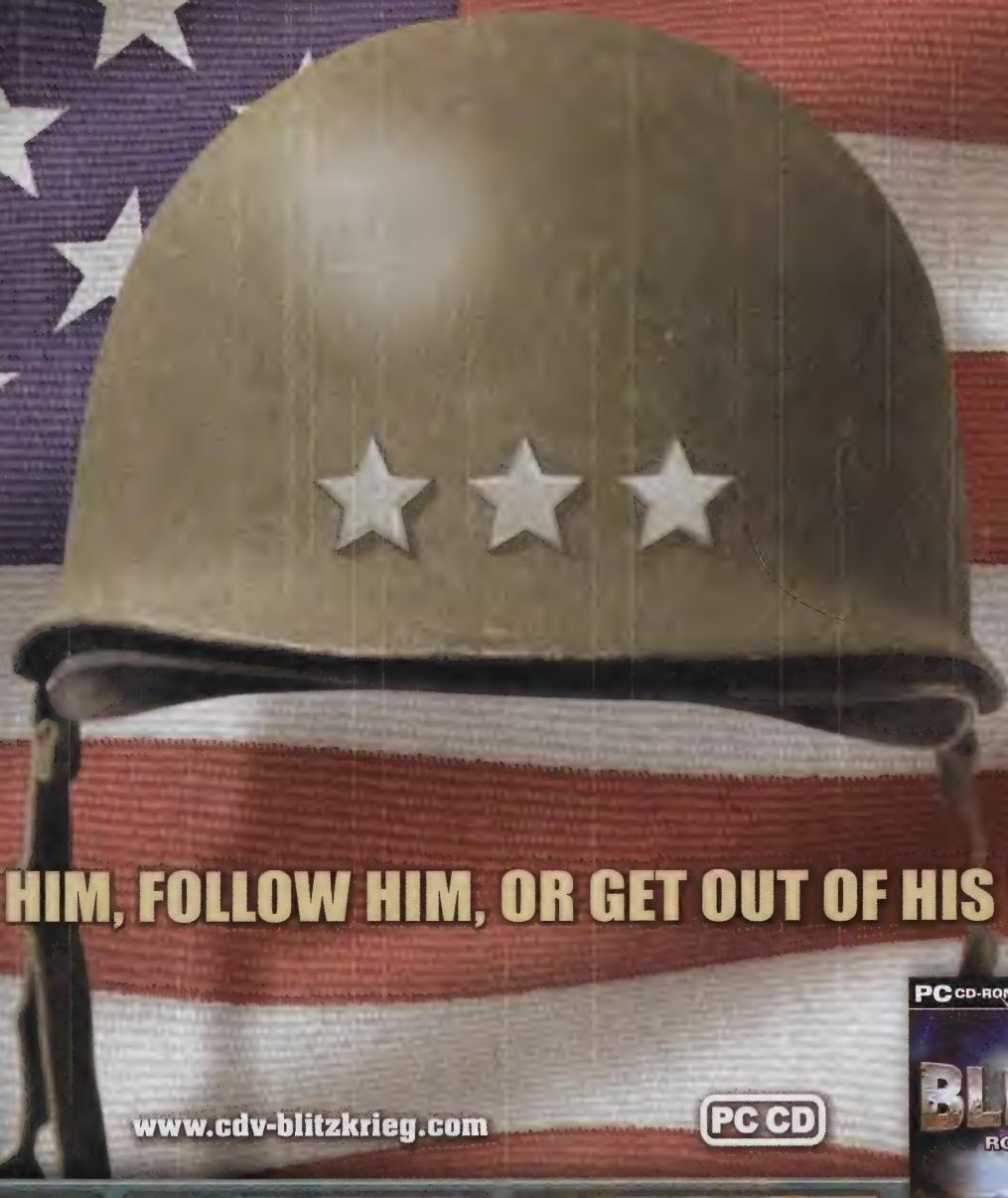
Publisher Activision
Developer id Software/Nerve
Link www.doom3.com

A return to the demonic domain beckons, with even more frights, guns and monsters



Scientists don't have to be ugly, but they do have to wear specs.

HAVE YOU GOT THE BALLISTICS TO PUSH PATTON?



LEAD HIM, FOLLOW HIM, OR GET OUT OF HIS WAY!

www.cdv-blitzkrieg.com

PC CD



Missions designed in 1944

RELEASE
MARCH 05

Brothers in Arms

To understand just how unusual Gearbox's approach to scenario design is in *Brothers In Arms*, you really need a *velo*, a *carte de Normandie*, and a *chambre* at the delightful, peacock-patrolled Chateau Bel Enault (tel: 0033 233 713048, ask for Spencer). Rise early, devour a few *pain au chocolat* and a bowl

or two of *chocolat chaud* (Vive le France!) then pedal off in the direction of Carentan. Within a few minutes you'll be at Dead Man's Corner; the setting for BiA Mission 5.

Once the painful stitch in your side has subsided (that seventh pastry was asking for trouble) get back in

the saddle and race south down the D913 until you reach a roundabout. Hang a droit here, and a hundred yards further on you'll arrive at the scene of Cole's Charge: Mission 6.

Assuming you're reasonably fit and your carte-reading skills are up to scratch, you could carry on like this all

ON THE DISC For more war-filled screen of France c. 1944 have a gander at the disc > Galleries

day and get to see every one of BiA's battlefields.

This incredibly petite play area is a fascinating consequence of Gearbox's refreshing if risky decision to base their FPS game on the actions of *one* real-life US airborne regiment (The 502nd

THE PITCH

D-Day drama drawn directly from the yellowing pages of period combat reports.





A design debate eventually won by Gearbox's realism camp means panzers are impervious to standard grenades.



One day FPS log-piles will all have lovely Meqon-style physics.

Parachute Infantry) during one brief, brutal operation (the capture of the town of Carentan in the days following D-Day). No WWII shooter has ever tried anything quite like this before, certainly none have ever gone to so much trouble to recreate real locales. The odd wall or hedgerow may have been adjusted here and there, but basically, the hamlets, fields, and towns you will see on your screen are the ones troops saw through their bobbing weapon sights and fear-fogged field-glasses 60 years ago.

Surviving in these eerily authentic environments will

require tactics of similar fidelity. Forego the recommended 'find 'em, fix 'em, flank 'em' attack approach in favour of gung-ho glory-hunting and you and your controllable comrades will be pushing up Gallic daisies before you can scream "Medic!" Although the first few hours on damp French loam are spent alone and virtually weaponless (the result of foul weather on the night of the drop) pretty soon there are a couple of troop teams in tow: one weighed down with

support weapons like the BAR, the other – a more nimble force – armed with sub-machineguns and carbines. Employing these chaps wisely via the elegant 'go there, engage that' cursor command system is often the difference between bitter defeat and famous victory.

Squeak like mice and answer to 'Stuart'

On perhaps half-a-dozen occasions squad leaders will have a third force to throw into the fray. Because the 't' word gets used way too often in games magazines we'll just say that these ferrous friends come in every colour as long as it's olive green, squeak like mice tenements when they move, and answer to names like 'Stuart'.

If the ability to order infantry and armour about brings to mind WWII RTS greats like *Soldiers* and *Close Combat* then other novel features like the situational awareness camera (soar above the battlefield like a curious crow whenever you please) and the suppression icons (read just how rattled your opponents are in an instant) only reinforce the association. For those who'd rather experience *BIA*'s pulse-propelling cocktail of command and combat without artificial aids, then thankfully the option will be there to ditch these devices along with your billowing 'chute, the second your boots hit the DZ.

TIM STONE

README

Publisher Ubisoft
Developer Gearbox
Link www.brotherstinarmygame.com

The closest thing you can get to a Band of Brothers game. A rare respect for history.



The 101st Airborne aren't known for their cowering, which might explain why *BIA* doesn't feature a prone posture or leaning.



A new hope

Knights of the Old Republic 2

RELEASE FEBRUARY

The genius of Bioware was to set their game 5,000 years before *Phantom Menace*. Lucas' universe is a rich one, and while his films do not necessarily live up to the dream, it remains an ideal place in which to set an intricate, ethically driven RPG adventure. And this time around, that adventure is being written by Chris Avalone, who wrote the literate and much admired RPG *Planescape: Torment*. *KotOR 2* is thus a sequel that we looked on recently with something of the excitement of seven-year-olds on Christmas Eve.

While tweaks have been made to Bioware's engine (most crucially allowing dozens more characters on screen at once), it all immediately feels comfortingly familiar. However, this might well be one of the few comforts going. Inspired by the morally challenging nature of Bioware's original, Avalone has set out to create a darker, more complicated moral world. Previously, choosing between Light or Dark was often a stark and obvious choice. Do you do good, do you do bad? Avalone's

intention is to blur that line and make decisions more complex.

As you'd expect, there are also piles of new Force powers and feats, 60 of them, with more elaborate animation routines that develop as your characters become more powerful. It appears that more emphasis has been put on battles, increasing their

importance in your progression. As for recognisable characters, T3 is present at the start, and others will cameo. Don't tell anyone, but thanks to an

ON THE DISC The world of *KotOR* is looking better than ever. Check it out for yourself > Galleries

accidentally loaded level, we are pleased to confirm that an HK model droid also appears, with a very familiar voice.

LucasArts tell us that various team members cried during testing, and not because of bugs. If it can reduce those developing it to emotional wrecks, just imagine what it could do to us.

JOHN WALKER

THE PITCH

Cinematic Star Wars adventure, in the form of an RPG to rival the acclaimed original *KotOR*.

README

Developer: Activision
Publisher: Obsidian Entertainment
www.obsidianent.com

Adventure, emotion, moral choices. It's our chance to star in another epic Star Wars tale.

Unreal PCs



"Makes an excellent PC case... it's quiet, attractive and well designed"

WWW.PIMPRIG.COM

**Serious kit for
serious gamers...**

Fighter
Budget Performance System

CASE: Alien X with 500W PSU
PROCESSOR: AMD® Athlon™ Barton XP3000 512k cache +333 FSB
MOTHERBOARD: MSI K7N2 Delta-ILSR nForce 2, ATX, DDR400, 10/100 Lan, USB 2.0, 1394, 6Ch Audio, SATA, Raid
MEMORY: 512 MB CORSAIR DDR 400 PC 3200 Memory
VIDEO CARD: 128Mb Excalibur (HIS) Radeon 9800Pro Platinum (D-Sub, DVI, TV-out)
SOUND CARD: Multi Speaker 3D Audio 5.1 Channel Support
HARD DRIVE: Maxtor Diamondmax + 9 120GB SATA T2000 RPM
OPTICAL: Aopen 52X2X52X CD-RW & 16X DVD Combo
PORTS: Front x8 USB 2.0 (6 rear & 2 front) headphone, mic & 3.5" Silver floppy Drive
SOFTWARE: XP Microsoft® Windows™ Home Edition, Service Pack 2
COOLING/EXTRAS: AKasa uprated CPU cooler & 2 CoolerMaster 80MM RED LED FANS

£699!
Inc VAT & delivery

Dreadnaught
Mid Range System
(PICTURED ABOVE)

CASE: Antec® LANBOY case with Gold 550w PSU
PROCESSOR: AMD® Athlon™ 64 BIT 3000 Newcastle
MOTHERBOARD: Asus K8V-GD, VIA K8T800, Gbit Lan, USB 2.0, 6Ch Audio, SATA, Raid
MEMORY: 1GB Corsair Value Select PC3200
VIDEO CARD: 256MB Galaxy Glacier GF 6900 GT DDR3 256BIT TV/DVI
SOUND CARD: Multi Speaker 3D Audio 6 Channel Support
HARD DRIVE: Maxtor Diamondmax + 9 160GB 7200 RPM SATA
OPTICAL: Aopen 52X2X52X CD-RW & 16X DVD Combo
PORTS: Front x8 USB 2.0 (6 rear & 2 front) headphone, mic & 3.5" Silver floppy Drive
SOFTWARE: Microsoft® Windows™ XP Home Edition, Service Pack 2
COOLING/EXTRAS: x2 Blue 120MM fans, AKasa CPU cooler, Blue cold Cathode & Window Applique

£699!
Inc VAT & delivery

Planet Killer System
High Range System

CASE: Antec® P160 Case with 550w PSU
PROCESSOR: AMD® Athlon™ 64 BIT 3400 Clawhammer
MOTHERBOARD: Asus K8N-E Deluxe, nForce 250Gb, Gbit LAN, USB 2.0, 1394, 8Ch Audio, SATA, Raid
MEMORY: 1 GB Corsair XMS PC 3200 Memory
VIDEO CARD: 256MB Gainward GeForce 6800 ULTRA PP II 2600 DDR3 TV Out Dual DVI Retail
SOUND CARD: Multi Speaker 3D Audio 8 Channel Support
HARD DRIVE: 200Gb Maxtor DiamondMax Plus 9 (7200rpm, 8MB)
OPTICAL: LG GSA-4082B - x8 DVDRW/x6 CDRW/x24 CD-ROM
PORTS: Front x8 USB 2.0 (6 rear & 2 front) headphone, mic & 3.5" Silver Floppy Drive
SOFTWARE: Microsoft® Windows™ XP Home Edition, Service Pack 2
COOLING/EXTRAS: x2 Blue 120MM fans, AKasa CPU cooler

£1299!
Inc VAT & delivery

FOR MORE INFO CHECK OUT OUR SITE:
WWW.unrealpcs.co.uk
Tel: 01753 670653.

All product photos are for illustrative purposes only. All registered trademarks and trademarks are the property of their respective owners. Components offered are subject to availability and may be changed for equivalent technologies.

Can it recapture the castle?

Stronghold 2

RELEASE
JULY 2005



"You down there! Peasants! Bring me a baby to eat at once!"

Being a King is ace. Don't just take my word for it – turn your eyes towards the secondary evidence of the history books. Check how many rulers have their cause of death listed as consuming a 'surfeit of lampreys'. One would be strange enough, but the number of monarchs whose guts have been ripped asunder by one too-many jellied eel is frightening. Being able to gorge yourself to gastric-gut-explosions? Now that's a job. And with *Stronghold 2*, Firefly are attempting to bring you closer to that experience of Lordhood than previously thought possible. Yes.

Between them, *Stronghold* and its skirmish-based 1.5 sequel *Stronghold: Crusaders* managed to be something of a sleeper hit, selling one and a half million copies to would-be castle architects and defenders. The premise was a simple one: build and besiege castles, in an RTS-style world. *Stronghold 2* expands the basics in a number of ways, while trying hard to increase the depth of the simulation with altogether new features. For example, the aforementioned Lordiness. The new 'honour' resource is accumulated by you setting about accomplishing tasks that have a certain chivalric bent to them. While low levels of



Those homes are far too close to your castle. Demolish them.

honour can be accrued from small tasks, such as the constant scribbling of monks' calligraphy pens, larger projects bring bigger bonuses. For example, holding a medieval banquet with a single boar is clearly a little bit embarrassing – but one fully stocked with enough wine, ale, eels and hot pig for everyone will send your ratings skywards. With dozens of other elements like 'gong' gathering (assorted detritus and human poop, medieval euphemism non-fans),

Wine, ale, eels and hot pig for everyone

crime outbreaks and disease-fighting, on the economic side there's a lot more to deal with even before a blow is struck in anger. And it's all done in 3D. Now, while "It's game X... but in 3D" has been a standard marketing recipe since decent processors were invented, *Stronghold* uses its graphics for much more than merely updated aesthetics. Where previously constructing castles proved awkward, now towering citadels can be formed by painting walls onto the map. They

function in a more accurate manner, too. Don't expect to see an archer slowly knocking down a wall as in the original – you're going to need battering rams, climbing gear or catapults to get around those stony constructs. Additionally, this 3D physicality means that the castle's use as an engine of war in itself can be better portrayed, with the opportunity to carefully craft killing zones. Every interior is now detailed, so you can even install your own spiral staircases for those all-important Errol Flynn-style swordfights. Also, when you're not fighting, the smoothly disappearing walls let you study the everyday lives of your citizens, making *Stronghold 2* the best medieval history lesson this side of the smelly-vision Viking centre in York.

With two narrative campaigns, one for an economic-centred player and one for the RTS-heads, skirmish modes, historical play and multiplayer, it looks like *Stronghold 2*'s going to make a whole lot of gamers feel their home (PC) is their castle.

KIERON GILLEN

README

Publisher Take Two

Developer Firefly

Link www.fireflyworlds.com

The king sim returns with a lot more on offer. The new 3D look could make it a keep(er).

That's
entertainment



Introducing the K500i entertainment phone on Orange

Get exclusive Alicia Keys downloads free when you buy the Sony Ericsson K500i on Orange.
Simply visit Orange World by clicking on the K500i.

Ask an Orange Phone Trainer for a demonstration at your nearest Orange Shop.

For more info, plus interactive demos of Orange World and the K500i,
log onto www.K500iEntertainmentPhone.com.



Buy the K500i now!

Sony Ericsson



Terms & Conditions: The offer is available to new connections, upgrades and pay as you go customers between 1 November and 31 December 2004. Connection to pay monthly is subject to status and a minimum 12-month contract. Minimum monthly spend of £15 per month applies. For full terms and conditions visit www.orange.co.uk.

The jungle massive

RELEASE
MARCH 2005

Boiling Point

How ambitious can games get? Try this FPS based on the Columbian drug wars. Investigating the kidnap of your daughter, you discover a murky world of government oppression, corruption, drug warfare, tequila, and strawberry jam.

You're allowed to roam 625 square kilometres of verdant jungle, on foot or by automobile, helicopter, boat or submarine. To buy the latest vehicles you need to earn cash, by completing missions for the various factions. Taking on the drug lords nets you wealth, and a whole bunch of enemies: enter coca territory and you're likely to attract unwanted attention. And RPG fire. Or you could just rob the national banks, as Thomas Shaefer, *Boiling Point's* producer, demonstrated for us, pulling out a M-16 and mowing his way through security on his way to the vault. Then he reloaded, walked out, bought a bunch of roses for the cashier and asked her out for a drink. Why? Because he can.

As you play, your character becomes more familiar with your weapons. Regularly create brain/bullet interactions via the Dragunov sniper rifle and you'll find your shots become more accurate. It works for your ability



Mocking the shaman's ability to make shrunken heads was a mistake.



THE PITCH
Forget GTA. Pursue your criminal career in the deadly, sprawling jungle world of the drug lords.



ON THE DISC In the jungle, the choppers sleep tonight. For more screenshots > Gallerie

to tease information from alcoholics in the tumbledown bars, too. Downing a couple of shots of tequila also helps, but don't try to act on your tips too soon – you'll barely be able to shoot through the Cerveza haze.

As you sleep the world moves on. Move out of the city, and you'll spot skirmishes, government-backed rebels engaged in perpetual turf wars with rebels. You'll need to pick your way around the battlezones, avoiding stray bullets, scavenging from the bodies of the fallen.

Which brings us to jam. As a final flourish, Thomas shows just what you can do with fruit preserves, bouncing a jar against wall, and onto the head of a local gang lord. It smashes open, drawing in a flight of buzzing bees. They chase their victim out of the room, screaming in terror.

How ambitious can games get? Put it this way. When Thomas speaks, he doesn't talk about "the game", he talks about "the world".

TIM EDWARD

README

Publisher Atari
Developer Deep Shadows
Link www.deep-shadows.com
A vast playing area, enormous freedom, and big guns. This could be really huge.

AUDIGY2 ZS

AN OFFER YOU CANNOT REFUSE



HITMAN CONTRACTS

THIEF

DEADLY SHADOWS

SOUNDS BEST ON



Go-Interactive

ideas

10

Loved by games. Loved by gamers!

out of the box with the Sound Blaster Audigy 2 ZS, now shipping with full contracts and Thief: Deadly Shadows. Discover how EAX can bring your gaming with realtime hardware accelerated environmental modelling in today's games. Today over 400 titles are EAX enhanced. Sound Blaster Audigy 2 ZS - the creators of PC audio. www.europe.creative.com

Get CREATIVE

Squad thrusts

Star Wars Republic Commando

RELEASE
FEBRUARY

This new first-person shooter set in the Star Wars universe will contain hints and links to the Episode 3 movie, despite what we were told in our *Republic Commando* feature earlier this year (PCG 133). Still, it's impossible to divine whether this change of approach is due to a passionate drive in the developers' hearts, or just because LucasFilms want as much hype as possible. But it does lend credibility to what initially appeared to be a very loose canon.

Set between the (non)events of Episodes 2 and 3, *Republic* shows little intention of telling an epic story. All the focus is on the action. And from what we've seen so far, it's quite some action. The tutorial level alone was an extraordinary fray in the canyons of Episode 2, with foes attacking from all angles, explosions, scenery damage, and a pyrotechnic shazam that shows how much Lucas have upped the

already impressive *Unreal* engine.

Our worry has always been the game's squad-based approach. Such an approach can often cause detachment from the player character, and hinder your progress thanks to the idiot AI of the

computer controlled troopers. But such fears can do little but melt away once you've seen one of your three squad-mates duck beneath your line of fire, or take cover when they notice you are – for no sensible reason –

shooting at the explosive barrels.

ON THE DISC More Republican screenshots for you on this month's disc > Galleries

There are almost no similarities between *Republic* and the stalwarts of the genre, the *Rainbow Six* games. Your squad is controlled by the simplest means – if something can be interacted with, a hologram of a team member appears, and you click. That's it. And if that's too much to be bothered with, they're the brains to just get on with it themselves. This all contributes to the ultimate goal of *RC* – to have you recognise that your team of elite-of-the-elite clone soldiers is your greatest weapon, and that alone you're just one quarter of a man. In fact, you can only lose when all four members of the team die – should anyone go down, including yourself, they can be revived by another, either during or after a battle.

That may seem a little sanitised but you'll be glad the

THE PITCH
Clone-troopers join the SAS and dispense Special Forces justice in the Star Wars universe



GAIN ACCESS TO BRIDGE

ELECTRO-ZAP!

Shield effects make for much pretty. Unreal's lighting is put to good effect, although the rest of the engine has been so modified as to be almost unrecognisable.

KILL KILL KILL

Rubbish droid! Revenge can be yours. "THIS is for Episode 1." BLAM! "THIS is for Episode 2." POW! "And this is probably for Episode 3 we'd imagine." BIFF!

HIDE ME

A squad member using the scenery for cover - something they'll do instinctively, or at your command. They love you. They want to be like you.

ILL BEHAVIOUR

The health readouts of your team-mates. If someone hits zero, it's not a huge problem - you can either revive them yourself, or have another commando do it.

troops stay around as the AI is class. As well as the common employed by your crew, the enemies appear to have room for of sensible improvisation. When a grenade was thrown at the baddie, he bent down, picked it up and threw it back. So unusual, and yet such a shock. These guys actually fight back. The final level promises to pit against the minions of Episode 3's arch villain, whoever may be. Excellent spinny as will also feature, reminiscent of the ninjas in *Half-Life*, but far more competent. *Star Commando* could do a lot to excite the followers of the genre. As for those with an iota of cynicism, it looks like quite the missing reinvention of the squad-based shooter, too.

JOHN WALKER

EDOME

Activision
LucasArts
lucasarts.com/games

With enough action, this could be a breath of fresh air for squad-based shooters.

A large amount of HUD clutter ensures you never forget you're wearing a helmet.

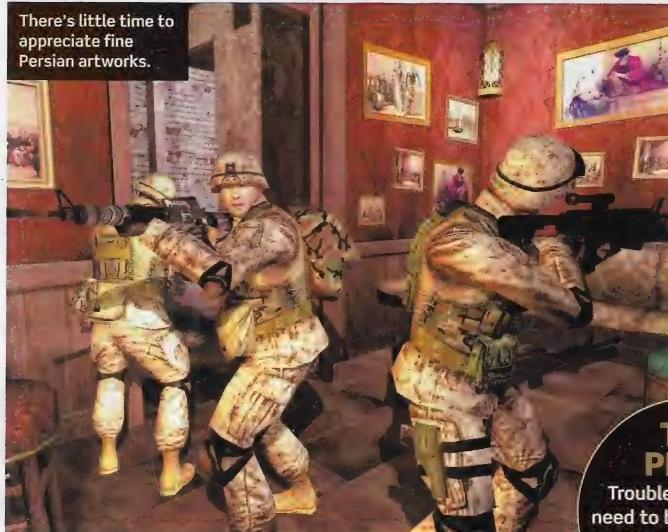


Why, look: it's the lesser-spotted jingo

Close Combat First to Fight

RELEASE
JANUARY

There's little time to appreciate fine Persian artworks.

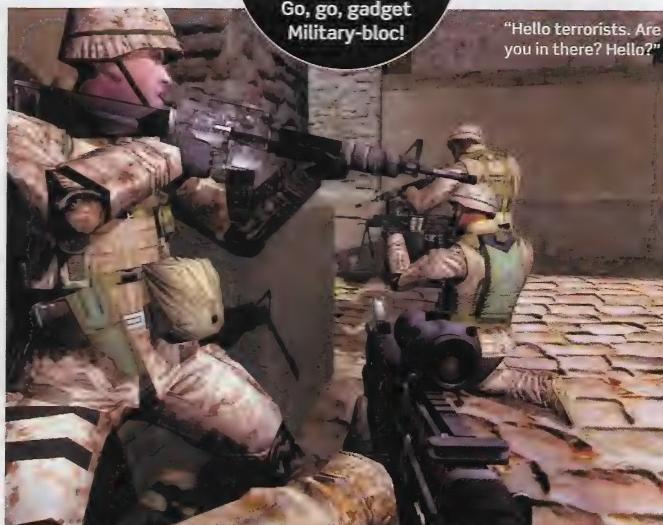


Hit-location means that enemies can be felled with a hit to the head or kneecap.



THE PITCH

Troublesome types need to be suppressed in the Middle East.
Go, go, gadget Military-bloc!



Those of you who have been taking notes will recall that the *Close Combat* games have crafted some fine, realistic combat over the years. These were strategy games that boasted attention to detail, tactical splendour and, according to Tim 'Rommelbuster' Stone, included some of the finest Nazi death-rattles of all time. *First to Fight* is attached to this series in name only. We're no longer posing heroically in the lanes and meadows of Normandy, but instead getting gritty with the terroriztas in modern-day Beirut. And this time out you're in the thick of it: *First to Fight* is introducing *Close Combat* to Mr FP Shooty.

First to Fight puts you in the role of the fireteam leader of a US Marines urban warfare squad. While you'll be familiar with the 'realistic' pace and trajectory of combat, seen many times in the likes of *Ravenshield* or *Delta Force*, this time you're playing quite a different tune. These are the Marines, not special forces, and the game reflects that fact with unerring detail. You're fighting alongside three other soldiers, each of whom has a

specific role in the fireteam, just like real-world Marine action.

The AI controlling your men is a fine beast, with only minor wobbles to make it ever seem less than sturdy. While the innate responses of your buddies allows you to handle most situations with ease and efficiency, it's also possible to give these chaps orders, such as laying down suppressing fire, or storming a room. The

effectiveness with which your team carries out such actions all hinges on *Close Combat*'s familiar concessions to morale. In *First to Fight* your team

will be more accurate and faster to respond to danger if you're issuing sound orders and acting like a hero

yourself. Lose a man or allow yourselves to be peppered with Kalashnikov spit and the men start to lose their cool. The same

Peppered with Kalashnikov spit...

ON THE DISC More combat-intensive screenshots await your viewing pleasure > Galleries

goes for the enemy too, so the more brutal you are in capping their mates, the more likely it is that bads will either leg it, or simply give themselves up for capture.

Sounds good, but the accent on realism underlines the core problem for games like this: they run the risk of being rather dull. The drab streets of Lebanon are unrelenting in *First to Fight*, and the fact that most of your enemies are all Kalashnikov-toting 'terrorists' could detract from the variety of the final experience. Perhaps the fact that *First to Fight* is being developed as a training tool for US marines explains why it often feels both divorced from the realms of games-as-entertainment, and also manages to seem awkwardly jingoistic. Come January, we'll discover if they remembered to include any fun in the package.

JIM ROSSIGNOL

README

Publisher Take Two
Developer Destineer
Link <http://firsttotofight.com>

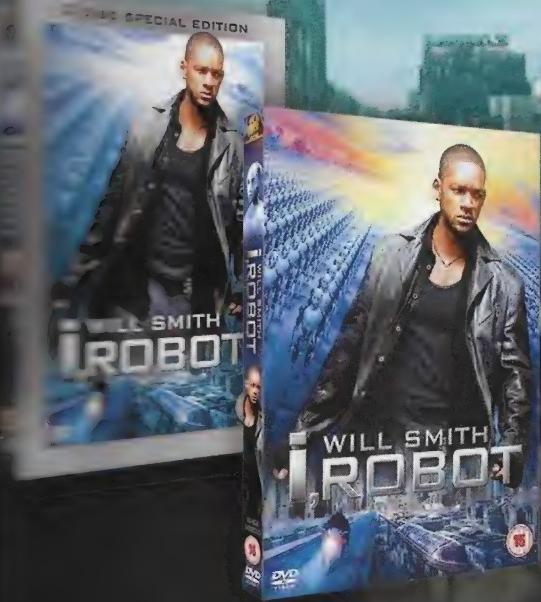
A flag-waving US Marine training sim turned commercial game. Could be moderately fun.

WILL SMITH I, ROBOT

THE FUTURE BEGINS ON DVD
FRIDAY 3RD DECEMBER



"ONE OF THE BEST MOVIES OF THE YEAR" ★★★★ DAILY MAIL



SINGLE DISC AND 2 DISC EDITIONS AVAILABLE

YOUR LETTERS



Cables



Featuring: This, that, and some of the other

SHORTS

Not complaining or anything, just something minor, but what happened to the issue number on the spine of the September issue? It's really useful.

Alan

Ah. The glue holding the numbers on was weaker than usual. From now on, all PCG issue numbers will be spot-welded on, in order to avoid any repetition of said incident. **PCG**

Lucky Al Bickham, still enjoying his early X-Com games. Last time I tried one it ran unplayably fast – what's his secret?

Steve

The original version had no framerate limiter, whereas the X-Com Gold Edition does. This can be downloaded from www.abandonia.com and, amazingly, it works fine under XP without needing any patches or anything! **PCG**



Tim looked on as another learned GAMER reader celebrated his high IQ...

My Britisher chums

For many years I have been reading various PC gaming periodicals. For all but the first year, I bought issues when a particular review or CD was advertised on the cover.

The reason for this was disappointment. Before my first year's subscription ran out I became depressed and frustrated by the increasingly juvenile tone of most of the writers and contributors.

It got to the point where it was a chore to get through the articles – even articles that were the reason I picked up the issue in the first place.

I don't remember what the first magazine subscription was, but it doesn't matter – every one I tried was the same. And the price of the magazine, even for a subscription, wasn't worth the one or two pieces I might want to read.

Then something happened the other day at a local bookseller. I spotted yet another PC gaming magazine with a couple of CDs on the front. It advertised an article and a demo for a game I was interested in. To my delight, when I got it home and started perusing it, I noticed some witty captions that caught my eye. This led to me reading some articles that I wouldn't have otherwise read.

After reading these, along with the articles which I purchased the magazine for, I was compelled to go back to the beginning and read everything – even the reviews of games I wasn't remotely interested in. The reason? I found every article

LETTER OF THE MONTH

You can charter those?

As a chartered physiotherapist I see a lot of people in pain from using computers for long periods of time. Indeed, far more people attend my clinic with neck, back or shoulder pain from extended computer work than from being squished in extreme sports. I know it may seem a bit inane doing exercises like Mr Motivator as your computer boots, but any of you who have had back pain will probably vouch for how painful and debilitating it can be. To that end:



- 1) Make sure your computer is directly in front of you, with the monitor at eye level.
- 2) Use a comfortable but firm chair that supports your lower back.
- 3) Avoid sitting in a slumped or slouched position.
- 4) Try and keep the back, neck and shoulders moving. Chair exercises can be very helpful and there are hundreds of them on the internet (including 'chair dancing'!). The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) has a leaflet called Fit to Work that also has some good exercises in it.
- 5) Try not to sit for too long, get up and move about where possible.
- 6) If you're in pain it's worth seeing your GP especially if you have back pain that radiates into the legs, or neck pain that radiates into the arms.
- 7) Take up a sport – snooker, darts or competitive drinking don't count!
- 8) Use your pelvic floor muscles – they support your back like a corset. Work them by contracting as if you are stopping peeing mid-flow. They also help with incontinence, so clench Ross, clench!

If you would like more advice or info you can consult the CSP website on www.csp.org.uk.

Tom Goom (senior physiotherapist), Winchester

*It's not often we get a genuinely helpful LoM but, thanks to Tom's words, the team has evolved from neanderthal to homo sapien. Everybody follow Tom's lead. No slouching! **PCG***

was written with a style and intelligence I was unaccustomed to. Even when dressing down a publisher for a poor excuse of a game, it was done with dignity and wit. This was in stark contrast to virtually every other PC gaming magazine I have ever read – even the

PC GAMER magazine I had purchased not two weeks before!

It was after noticing the spelling of certain words in a distinctly UK fashion that I turned to the cover and realised I had unknowingly procured the 'UK CD Edition' of PCGAMER. Mystery solved.

The best letter of the month wins an awesome GeForce 5900XT with 128Mb of memory, courtesy of Sparkle. Send your rants, raves and reactions to **Cables, PC GAMER, 29 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2DL** or email cables@futurenet.co.uk

POSSESSING BARBIE

BY ALICE BLACK

"I have a confession," typed BabyDoll...

...and I'm not the only one. Many of us have had similar thoughts about our Barbies. Here's what we've got to say.

"...and intelligence..." Indeed. And don't forget GAMER Snap...

as taught – even in high school one does not employ foul, or questionable, language when talking to a broad audience. Maybe publishers assume that all magazine readers are teenagers with limited social skills? The end result is that for the first time in years, I plan on getting a subscription to a magazine. Thanks again for getting this Yankee nothing that appeals to me as a gaming fan while still treating me like a thinking adult. **Steve Renken, email**

Dave. It's heartening to know our words are worth enough for you to subscribe to a foreign magazine. In you: the next issue of PC GAMER will come with a free black bag in case your head 'splodes awesomeness. **PCG**

I hastily mauled the Zero Hour disc

ooooo! I had just installed Zero Hour Reborn from your number DVD. As I removed the disc from my drive with one hand (carefully so as not to drop it), my other hand was removing the C&C Generals case. I hastily mauled the Zero Hour disc out of the case and saw my world come down around my ears. In my haste for GLA blood I had cracked the disk in half. I fought the tears for two hours while realisation of what I had done set in. On going to bed, I cried myself to sleep.

I thought I would share my pain – Oh, the pain – with you. Please don't mock me.

Craig Birch, email

Is sending a circular email of this letter to everyone on the magazine considered mocking? If so, whoops. **PCG**

Thanks again for treating me like an adult

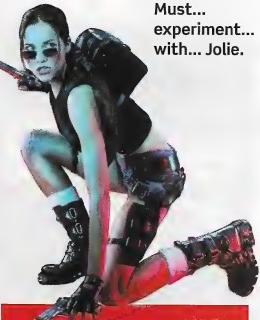
The Cradle to the grave

What games have changed me? The most recent would have to be Thief 3. The Cradle is the scariest thing I have ever experienced in my life. I jumped out of my chair and fell backwards, smashing my head painfully against my bed frame. I would have thrown up if I hadn't had a massive lump stuck in my throat. At points I froze, petrified by fear, unable to move. That place is just disturbing.



"Before I washed with Proten Bioclast v5, my skin looked like this... now look at me!"

Must... experiment... with... Jolie.



SHORTS

Don't you know Wolf is in Star Trek not Star Wars as mentioned in Goblets. Try to get your facts right in future.

Peter Sarfas

It's "Worf". We write a whole magazine with few errors. You can't even do two sentences.

PCG

What do you think, chicken or turkey? I think turkey.)

Al MacNeil

We'd rather combine the two into a wholly new animal, with the legs of a turkey and the breast of a chicken. But we're against animal testing here on PCG, so have decided to do the initial experiment with Kylie and Angelina Jolie. **PCG**

Need an expert on surfing the Net? Steve Kaye is the man.

**Falon Smith, PR
NO!** **PCG**

Please no more man-love GAMER Snaps, they degrade us all.

Michael Johnson
Agreed, signed: Ross, Tom, Tim, Mark S, Craig... **PCG**

YOUR LETTERS

SHORTS

Once, after a game of *The Sims*, I asked my girlfriend to make me a cup of tea. She did. **Dom Evans**
You are truly a God among men. **PCG**

If this isn't stupid I don't know what is. For compensation give me that graphics card you guys hold so dearly. Plus my dad will stop giving me 'The Look'.

David Maundrell
But if we hold it so dearly, why would we give it to you? Ahhh. **AHHHH! PCG**

You should make a second mag which comes out 2-3 weeks later with all the demos and stuff that come out after an issue.

Arsenalfc
Do you want me to cry, because I will you know... **PCG**

The offending picture from our *The Sims 2* review, featuring 'exposed' ladies (unless you live in Saudi Arabia, in which case, this page will have been ripped out again).



WE ASK YOU...

Because MI5 asked us to

Q Nowadays it's easy to download full games, for free, before they appear on the shelves of your local games emporium. Piracy is rife on the internet, and there seems to be nothing anyone can do to stop it. Do you do it? If so, why? Is it to try before you buy a game, or just because you want to? Let us know what you think.

Send your experiences of piracy to
Cables, PC GAMER, 29 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2DL
or email: cables@futurenet.co.uk



YOU ASK US...

Because you're bored, quite frankly

Q Loved the review of *Half-Life 2* in this month's issue. Only one little question to ask, why do you need a net connection to play the damn thing? It's a big, single-player experience and I'm a big single player. **Peter Pan, Glasgow**

A For the retail version, you need to connect once to authenticate the game. After that, it's fine. Steam's a bit different: Valve are tying their game closely into Steam to give you updates as soon as they're ready. The upshot is it's incredibly quick, but you do need to connect to the internet. **PCG**

Q I'm trying to download a huge bunch of files from somewhere using 'that bit torrent app' you guys included on the disc. But every time I leave my computer, the connection goes down. What's going on? **W Oddet, Gillingham**



"REPEAT! You must connect to internet... and no, I am not Patrick bloody Moore..."

A It sounds like 'bit torrent' is overloading all the ports on your connection, causing it to crash. Unfortunately, we're stumped as to the solution, but at least now you know what's causing the problem. You could try using another client - one that lets you control exactly what ports are open, as well as the download speed. **PCG**

making my gaming more fun, often leaves others with a bitter taste in other players' avatars' mouths. It started a few years back while playing *Dark Age of Camelot*. I found that I was a few silver coins short of a weapon I desired so I quickly asked around the market for some kind soul to lend me some coins. Within five minutes I had the money I required and some extra left over and this got me thinking about how much I could make just by begging...

Well, it's a lot and now I can't stop. On most games I have two characters: one for straight play and one for begging and stealing. I like to join guilds and rip them off in any way I can so that my main character can benefit. Is this wrong or am I just providing a more realistic gaming experience? Games such as *SWG* need scum hanging round starports; it's how it's meant to be. And for now that scum is me. Is this wrong?

PC GAMER has the power to stop me doing this act. If you guys judge it as bad then to stop me all you have to do is bring back Netgamer and my wicked ways will never reach the *World of Warcraft*.

Craig Whitcher, Worcester



Best of the Forum

Where the gaming angst is @



Thread HL2

AUTHOR **Munki**

New rumours from PC GAMER Forum have outraged *Half-Life* fans hungry for the long-awaited sequel. Information gathered suggests that *HL2* will be just 10 hours long and come with a security fix which only allows the player to complete the game twice before it deletes itself from the hard drive and releases a chemical which melts the game discs. Gabe Newell has yet to refute these claims, fuelling fears and sparking riots in the *Half-Life* fan quarters of major cities...

Thread Could you?

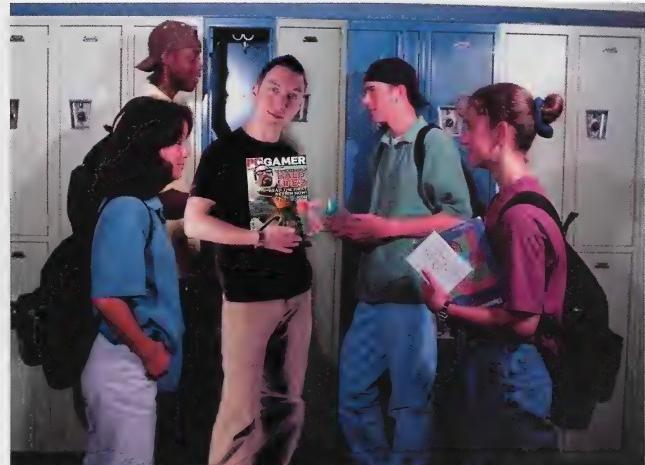
AUTHOR **=Dripfed=**

I wish I were able to write good quality slagging-off copy. Alas, I am limited to writing only the positive. To write: "Prague is a load of over-hyped arse foruppies and those who know no better to boast about" for my employers would lead to me having to take up full-time employment again and no longer being a lazy arsed travel scribe. Anyone got 2,000 words of fun things to say about Salt Lake City? I lost my luggage en-route so I'm far from enthusiastic and staring at a diatribe about Mormon being a false religion and rants about the streets being too wide. Un-sellable. Come and work in travel writing. It's great. Live life in jet lag mode. Only touch soap the size of a water biscuit and shower with smurf-sized bottles.

Thread Game culture acceptable?

AUTHOR **Mystig Smeg**

I'm currently involved in a fair few



Everywhere he went, Jim was besieged by youths desperate to hear his first-hand experiences of *Half-Life 2*. Modest as a mouse, Jim has never advertised his fame...

interviews and selection processes for jobs in the armed forces (as well as a number of interviews over the years for schools, university, jobs and suchlike). All of these interviews (and future ones will too) have asked me about my hobbies. For me these are rugby and PC games, which hardly strikes me as a job winning thing to include. One of the few times I have said in an interview that I do play games was my most recent interview with a Navy Officer where I voiced that I played PC games and rugby. She gave me an odd look. A short silence followed and she wrote down that I played rugby for my local town and NOT a thing about PC gaming.

funniest screenshot ever and replacing it with soldiers with their heads up each others' arses. GAMER Snap Rocks.

Thread How to get your ideas in a game: give them away

AUTHOR **The Bag**

Ideas aren't worth \$[catalogical material - Ed]. There's two reasons devs/publishers don't take outside ideas: a> fear of being sued, b> they've got enough of their own. It's what you do with the idea that counts. Sure, everybody's got good ideas - but very few of them will actually work in reality.

Thread German Front MOD (would you play a German-based WWII game?)

AUTHOR **Scouser Tommy**

On the other hand I suppose seeing the war from the disillusioned eyes of a desperate German conscript could be a profound experience - they could script the game so you don't actually kill any Allies, just witness it, and then script a scenario where you catch up with an American but decide to let him go or just shoot him in the shin.

Thread Battle for Middle-Earth OWNZ!

AUTHOR **NightShadow**

The scene of Helms Deep in one of the videos is pretty pitiful compared to the actual battle.

Thread Battle for Middle-Earth OWNZ!

AUTHOR **Acht**

My grandaddy fought in that. Nods.

Netiquette :-){

FORUM CUSTOMS EXPLAINED

No 44 Official Threads

This one troubles us. Every so often, a thread will appear with the [official] tag, and hang around for ever. We don't endorse them, or place any seal of approval on their contents, yet they just hang around. Like, the Official Hardware for Sale thread - the forum's own miniature classified ads. It started in April of last year, and it's still going strong. Why? We have absolutely no idea. Take a look: <http://forum.pcgamer.co.uk/viewtopic.php?t=18491>

Emergency Emoticon No 7

Strider (mid-section view)

Make friends and influence virtual people! Post your suggestions, thoughts, musings and opinion to the PC GAMER Forum at <http://forum.pcgamer.co.uk>
Registered Users: 8338 Newest user at time of going to press: **EviL_Ghost**



Kuma War controversial? No. Just shoot that evil terrorist, dammit!

Kuma Chameleon

The first say, you lads do a astic mag. Love it. My only turn at this point regards the of Kuma\War in member's issue.

What bothers me is it came across as sanctimonious. I agree completely that the game is in shamingly poor taste, but there be statement that didn't particularly say what I think you meant it to.

In a whole, it's entirely without merit, except for people who get off on thinking that the digital sprite in shooting represents someone was living and breathing a few ago."

Medal of Honor was as an amazing game and a huge amount of kudos went to the mission.

That point, you were shooting representations of people alive and 60 years ago.

because it's longer doesn't mean they aren't real people. And yet this didn't seem to upset many people.

it didn't upset maybe it should have...

Phil Davidson, email

storming Omaha beach gun in hand. You your rifle over the gun and pop the head off.

know his this

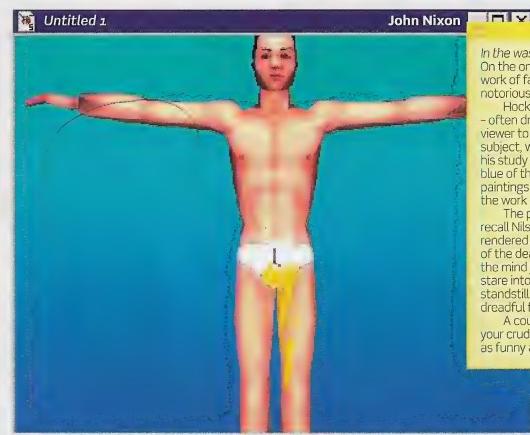
mean to you? My guess is Kuma War's

are to put faces personalities, families, parents and children) to guys. **PCG**

YOUR PICTURES

Gamer Snap

If GAMER was a jail, this would be the shower



In the wastebasket this month, as voted by Art...
On the one hand, this challenging piece clearly references work of famed artist David Hockney, and the 'death' studies of notorious British serial killer Dennis Nilsen.

Hockney produced many ambiguous studies of lounging – often dressed or semi-nude people – which challenged the viewer to extrapolate the sexual identity of both the artist, a subject, while relishing the sensual handling of paint. John in his study with equal boldness, the provocative choice and blue of the background clearly recalling Hockney's many 'sex' paintings (a further layer of Freudian reference itself, perhaps the work demands yet deflected interpretation).

The posture, crude styling and explicit subject matter recall Nilsen's corpse studies (doilies that the psychopath rendered postmortem of many of his victims). These tragic's of the dead – half naked and posed in simulations of desire – the mind just as John's crucified victim does; on his face, they stare into the abyss that Nilsen's victims shared, the future a standstill. The urine pouring down his thigh implies the awareness dreadful fate about to befall him... or of an event already occurring.

A counter argument, however, is that under absolute scrutiny your crude yellow daubs on the body of a semi-naked man is as funny as a bus shelter RUBBISH-II (But more on the disc)



Wastebasket



Send us your funny game pics. It's easy. Just grab the IrfanView app from the disc and follow the simple instructions. Best snap wins the top 10 PC games from Play.com. Send snaps and captions to Gamer Snap, PC GAMER, 29 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2DL or pccgamer@futurenet.co.uk



Alienware recommends Microsoft® Windows® XP.

Alienware Difference

- Cutting-Edge Technology
- Freephone Hotline
- Alienware Upgrade Policy
- 24/7 Freephone Tech Support
- Alienware 14-Day Return Policy



www.alienware.co.uk/pcg | 0800 279 9751

[Side of United Kingdom 00353 906 456 500]

Alienware Area-51® featuring Intel® Pentium® 4 processor with HT Technology, provides the power to work, play and experience broadband Internet without compromise. So don't settle for less, check out www.alienware.co.uk/pcg



Uncensored

You write, we hastily rewrite



THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS

Reviewed by Jim Rhodes

PCG 137, Score 91%



The streets aren't safe for a criminal.

Imagine, if you will, a game. In this game, you are forced to endure endless amounts of cr(*bothersome and troubling misfortune* – Potty Mouth Ed) before happening upon gaming bliss. It's akin to trying to pull the wrapper off a Swizzel lolly when they've gone a bit happy with the glue gun. The frustration, the tears, the screaming and shouting. Ah, happy adulthood.

Back to the point. Whoever decided that putting actively hostile elements in the cityscape was a worthy idea, deserves public shaming of the highest order. And we're not talking 'I'm a Celebrity' levels of humiliation, either. The words "public enema" spring to mind, although I'm sure that the Jackass mob would turn up with a video camera and proceed to annoy innocent passers-by.

Whilst some might argue that battling through the city adds to the tension, or is more realistic, the simple fact is that having to creep and crawl absolutely everywhere, just to get to a shop, or a fence, or even, one presumes, to go to the toilet, is hideous.

Which is a terrible injustice, because the mission sections are quite simply awesome. The

**The words
“public
enema”
spring to
mind**

atmosphere, the environmental interaction, the sneakiness, the cleverness of both yourself and the guards, are always a streetful of Pagans away.

It's not enough to stop me recommending *Thief: Deadly Shadows* as a fine, fine game, but it is enough for me to do this:

Jim's Rating 89%

PCG responds:

Honestly, Jim, just

because you personally are not good enough to play the game as it's meant to be played is no reason to take it out on the poor little score. Pick on something your own size, can't you?

They don't make 'em like they used to. Why? Well, no mere mortal like myself can answer that; ask Kieron. What I do know is that, generally, the opening statement is true. You want proof? Two words: *Grim Fandango*.

This game supersedes most of the younger contenders in terms of narrative, and graphically. *Grim Fandango* stands up to modern standards in all its bony glory. This is not to say the game is without any problems. The sometimes random collision detection is a tad annoying, but the rewards that await the player

more than make up for this. It's the kind of game that blesses you with heart-warming memories. In fact, that's what inspired me to write this very review – the terrible yet beautiful images of "sproutings" came back to me after walking past a particularly large bed of flowers. I give it 92% it's dead good.

James' Rating 92%

PCG responds: Couldn't agree more. (Except with your use of the word 'supersede' – Prod Ed). *Grim Fandango* makes us want to invent time machines so we can go back and experience it for the first time all over again. It's perhaps the best fusion of story and game LucasArts have ever given us.

READER REVIEW OF THE MONTH

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004

Reviewed by Mark Weir

PCG 135, Score 88%

Unreal Tournament 2004 is Epic's attempt at clay. Pure, unsculpted first-person shooter clay, that can satiate any shooting desire you may happen to have.

Got vehicles? Uhuh. Fancy some Assault Mode with bighead mutator and berserk weapons on? Done. How 'bout some classic deathmatch with instagib weapons, a twitch fan's dream? Sold.

There was always a danger that with so many modes, mutators and maps for the core game of *Unreal Tournament 2004*, it might feel like pouring a bucket of ideas into a thimble full of execution. But Epic have got this latest instalment down pat. It's fast. It's beautiful. It's all encompassing. It's the rockstar



Satiate your shooting desires with *UT2004*'s clay. Apparently.

girlfriend with a heart of gold. And with the mod scene for *Unreal* booming there is absolutely no reason to not have this game.

UT2004. Unsculpted? Yup. Unrefined? Hell no. Now shoo. I've got a date with Pe3Ter's face and the business end of a flak cannon...

Mark's Rating 90%

PCG responds: Everyone here loves *Unreal Tournament*. Everyone except Craig, that is. For some strange reason the lad hates 'twitch' games. (And shaving, but that's another story). Yet he owns *UT2004* and would never sell it. Why? Simple: the mods. Now join him in a Ghost style love-a-thon. He bagsies the Patrick Swayze role.

GRIM FANDANGO

Reviewed by James Highmore

PCG 62, Score 95%

They don't make 'em like they used to. Why? Well, no mere mortal like myself can answer that; ask Kieron. What I do know is that, generally, the opening statement is true. You want proof? Two words: *Grim Fandango*.

This game supersedes most of the younger contenders in terms of narrative, and graphically. *Grim Fandango* stands up to modern standards in all its bony glory. This is not to say the game is without any problems. The sometimes random collision detection is a tad annoying, but the rewards that await the player

PLANTRONICS®
World Leader in Communications Headsets

The reader review of the month wins a pair of Plantronics GameCom Pro 1 gaming headphones. Send your words to **Uncensored, PC GAMER, 29 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2DL** or email pcgamer@futurenet.co.uk





Log in where you
log out

With wireless broadband through Wanadoo's Livebox you can log on to the Internet anywhere in your home.
Just remember to flush afterwards. For more information visit www.wanadoo.co.uk

 wanadoo
wireless broadband

YOUR CHANCE

The Big Quiz

WIN A foldable PC

Will you accept the challenge?

Okay, so *Kohan II* is an ace RTS that scored 80% in issue 140. Take 2 published it, and we're running a competition for you to win a gorgeous Area 51 Alienware laptop, with a P4 3GHz processor, 512Mb of RAM and a GeForce 5700. Those are the facts of the piece. But, what is a *Kohan*?

We asked 100 people on the streets of Bath what exactly they thought a *Kohan* was. Here's a selection of their answers.

The *Kohan* question required deep thought and plenty of whisker scratching.



Jeff Crawley, 72, believed a Kohan was a bewinged beast from Hades with 12 spines, four legs and a red carapace that reflects your inner bastard. Thanks, Jeff. Susan Leffer, 34, thinks Kohan is the red button Dubya presses when he needs someone to butter his bagel (he's not allowed to use knives). James Roggit, 33,

Susan's partner, thinks it may be the spout on the machine that coats crisps with cheese and onion flavouring. Tom Woods, 14, thought it



The Alienware laptop is out of this world

might be an Arnold Schwarzenegger movie. And Anna Navarro, 45, actually pulled out a rather lengthy Kohan from her handbag and invited us to try it out, in the middle of the high street. We were shocked to say the least.

So there you have it, 100 people questioned but we're nowhere closer to finding out just what a Kohan is. We need help. We need guidance. Readers: this is where you come in...



HOW TO WIN

So what do you think a Kohan is? Is it a thing, a bit of something, an idea? We need you to quantify this quandary, readers. Build us a Kohan. Draw us a Kohan. Buy us a Kohan. It's entirely up to you. Use your imagination to interpret the word, and send your ideas into us with an explanation of exactly how you came to that conclusion. The entry that we decide we like the best, wins the very sexy PC you see right here. So get your thinking caps perched on your heads.

PC GAMER ENTRY FORM

Name _____

Postcode _____

Address _____

Tel _____

Email _____

If you don't wish to be informed of future events or offers from PC GAMER or its associates, tick this box.

MY MOST WANTED

MY TOP 5 MOST WANTED GAMES...

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

You don't have to fill this bit in, but we do appreciate the occasional direction. We compile all the entries into the Readers' Most Wanted Chart on page 10.



Send your competition entry and this form to the **WIN A FOLDABLE PC COMPETITION, PC Gamer, 29 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2DL**. Employees of Future Publishing or Take 2 may not enter. Entries in by December 22, 2004, the Editor's decision is final, no multiple entries and no cash alternatives.

And the winner is...

The winner of PCG140's 'Public Humiliation' competition

FIRST PRIZE GOES TO...

'Guinness advert', by Nick Eglington

"Tick followed tock followed tick... followed tock..." And so begins the best of this month's entries. It was a close call, with several up for contention, but **Nick Eglington** came up trumps.

How? By being conceptually brilliant and working with the competition idea: acting like the lamest park ride is the scariest rollercoaster known to man. Nick ripped off the ultra-pretentious Guinness advert of a few years back, the one with the craggy old surfer riding waves that turn into horses. He nicked the soundtrack (which means we can't run the video on the disc – removing the sound would lose the impact) and played the part of the man facing his demons. His fairground demons. A slow climb to the top of a kiddies slide, a puff on the inhaler and he's off. It perfectly fits the soundtrack of the advert: just at the end, his insane flailing stops, he jumps for joy and the soundtrack drops to silence as he celebrates. He should. He's won the PC.

 **ON THE DVD** Tom Feast's excellent entry cleverly manages not to use dodgy third party materials, and thus gets on the disc > Movies



AND THE REST...

(Right) We loved your entry, **Simon Coll**. The slapstick, the comedy soundtrack. You went above and beyond the standard we expected (lots of shakycam recorded on mobile phones) by adding special effects. **Tom Feast**'s entry was also outstanding. A five minute mockumentry on a day in the life of an extreme theme park rider. Good enough to make the discs, but not quite brilliant enough to wrest the prize from Nick.

But once again, some people just don't seem to understand the concept. Shall we spell it out for you? SENDING IN A SLIP ISN'T ENOUGH. Nick, Simon, and Tom all exceeded expectations, but you **Kevin Flannigan** of Belcoo, didn't even manage to include a photo.



YOUR SUBSCRIPTION

Get four issues & a great game free when you subscribe



Plus exclusive disc crammed with demos!

UK CD Edition £5.49
Christmas 2004/Issue 143
www.pcgamer.co.uk

BRITAIN'S BEST

PCGAMER DVD (31 PLAYABLE GAMES)

GAMES > MOVIES > MODS > TOOLS > EXTRAS

PLUS!

TEN EXCLUSIVE PLAYABLE DEMOS!

FULL SPEC WARRIOR NE

PAINKILLER

PLAY THE EPIC RTS

ALEXANDER

NEW MULTI-PLAYER DEMO

SMASHING FLAT OUT PLAYABLE DEMO

MEDAL OF HONOUR: PACIFIC ASSAULT

MONSTER 9GB DVD STUFFED WITH GAMES

16+ www.pcgamer.co.uk

PC GAMER FREE GAME APPLICATION

Yes! SEND ME 13 ISSUES AND A FREE GAME

THE FREE GAME I WOULD LIKE IS

Midtown Madness 2 Tribes 2

YOUR DETAILS

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Tel _____

Email _____

PAYMENT OPTION ONE

Pay by Direct Debit (UK only)

- I wish to subscribe to PC GAMER for £11.23 every three months by Direct Debit (CD Edition)
- I wish to subscribe to PC GAMER for £13.48 every three months by Direct Debit (DVD Edition)

ORDER CODE: PCGP143 OFFER ENDS: December 22, 2004

INSTRUCTION TO YOUR BANK OR BUILDING SOCIETY TO PAY BY DIRECT DEBIT



Future Publishing Ltd,
Cary Court, Somerton,
Somerset, TA11 6BR



DIRECT Debit

Originator's Identification Number

7 6 8 1 9 5

Please send this form to address shown

1 Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society branch

To the Manager: Bank name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

2 Account in the name (s) of _____

3 Branch sort code
(from the top righthand corner of your cheque)

4 Bank or Building Society
account number

5 Instruction to your Bank or Building Society

Please pay Future Publishing Direct Debits from the account detailed on this instruction, subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Future Publishing and if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank or Building Society.

Signature(s) _____ Date _____

Ref No (Office use only) _____

PAYMENT OPTION TWO

Pay by cheque/credit card

13 CD issues for the price of 9

£44.90

13 DVD issues for the price of 9

£53.90

Cheque (payable to PC GAMER. Sterling cheques drawn on a UK account)

Visa MasterCard American Express

Switch Issue No/Valid Date _____

Card No

Expires _____ Date _____

Signature _____

We will use the contact details supplied to communicate with you about your PC GAMER subscription. We'd also like to keep you up to date with any special offers or new products/services that may be of interest. If you're happy for PC GAMER, Future Publishing and its sister companies to contact you in this way, indicate here: email mobile. If you're also happy for us to pass your details on to carefully selected companies so they can send you relevant information about their products/services, indicate here: email mobile.

Please indicate if you do NOT wish to receive relevant information about special offers or products/services from PC GAMER, Future Publishing or any of its sister companies by post or telephone post or phone. Please indicate if you do NOT wish us to pass your details on to other carefully selected companies to enable them to contact you about their products/services by post or phone.

Terms & Conditions: we publish 13 issues of PC GAMER a year. Your subscription will start with the next available issue. Stocks limited to availability. Please allow 28 days for delivery of the gift. Details of the Direct Debit guarantee available on request.

① Send this form to PC GAMER,
Subscriptions, FREEPOST BS4900,
Somerton, Somerset, TA11 6BR

② Or call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
0870 444 8660

③ For overseas readers or to order online
www.futurenet.com/pcgamer

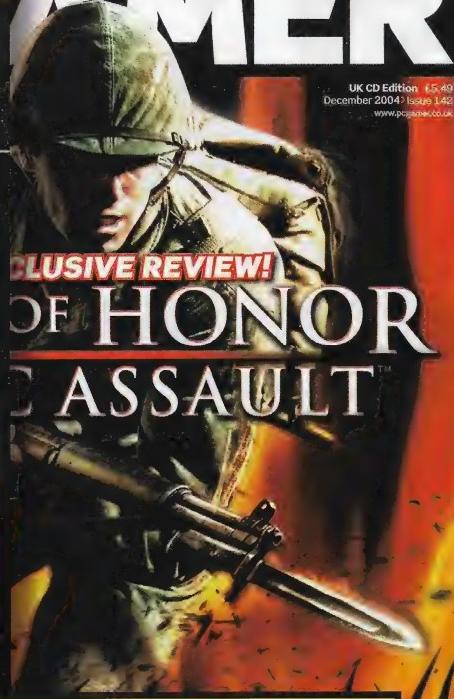


PC GAMER

TO HELL!
DOM 3
RECTION
OF EVIL

THE BEST
REVIEWS!

★★★★★
LOTR: BATTLE OF MIDDLE-EARTH
PRINCE OF PERSIA: WARRIOR WITHIN
NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND 2
MEN OF VALOUR
AXIS & ALLIES
GALAXIES: JUMP TO LIGHTSPEED
MORE...



PC GAMER

UK CD Edition £5.49 December 2004 Issue 149 www.pc-gamer.co.uk

'S INCREDIBLE..."

HALF LIFE 2

DO THE FIRST
REVIEW NOW!

THE BEST
REVIEWS!

★★★★★
ROME: TOTAL WAR
HALF-LIFE 2
FIFA 2005
COLIN MCRAE RALLY '05
SILENT HILL 4
TOTAL CLUB MANAGER 2005
NHL 2005
AND MORE...

UK CD Edition £5.49 www.pc-gamer.co.uk

'IVE
S!

ER
AR
SHOCK AND ORCHI

THE
SIMS 2

SEQUEL
SEEKED UP!
15 TOP
REVIEWS!
CONFLICT VIETNAM
RICHARD BURNS Rally
SHELDON CAMBODIA
KOH SAMUI CAMBODIA
SPIDER-MAN 2
D-DAY, MORE...



2

SAVE CASH
ON EVERY
ISSUE

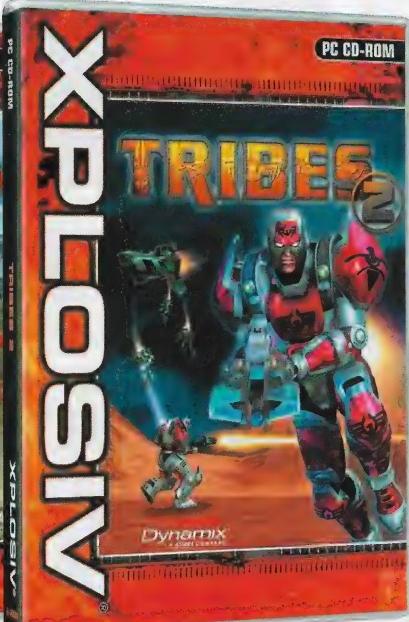
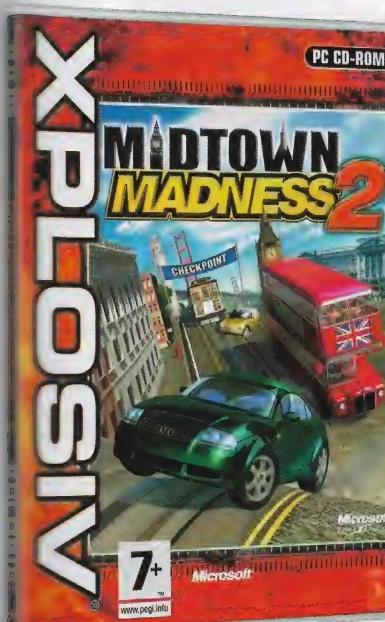
Save £1.84 per DVD edition; £2.04 per CD edition



EXTRA
LIFE...

FEATURING Shoutcasting Top 5 Medieval
modz>Doom 3 multiplayer test>The Sims 2
Bodyshop D-I-Y>Famine relief RTS
>World of E-Sport>Battlefield Vietnam
stunts and WWII mod>Half-Life murder
mystery>And more PC beauty...

CHAMP MANAGER 5



MIDTOWN
MADNESS 2

"An electric clamp attached to your
ecstasy centres."

PCG 89 86%

TRIBES 2

"Takes the online FPS formula to a new
level... Multiplayer happiness."

PCG 97 87%

3 **CHOOSE A**
BRILLIANT
FREE GAME

Just tell us which of these classics you want!

WHAT'S THE CATCH?

There isn't one. If you decide that PC GAMER isn't for you anymore, you can cancel your subscription at any time and we'll refund your money on any unmailed issues.

WORTH
£31.46
13 issues for the price
of 9 plus a game!

PC CD-ROM

PCGAMER

PRESENTS

AT LAST! A £9.99 RANGE THAT YOU CAN TRUST.



ALL THESE GREAT TITLES OUT NOW.

AVAILABLE FROM...

All our games are a minimum of 80% plus rated by **PCGAMER** Magazine
- Britain's best selling PC Games magazine.

80% PLUS

For details of our
future releases go to
www.mastertronic.co.uk

mastertronic

REVIEWS

The most respected verdict in gaming

Vast reserves of wisdom: model's own



OUR PROMISE

To review every game that's commercially available in the UK. If we reviewed a game, then it either didn't arrive in deadline or it has been deliberately withheld by its publisher. See the Where Are They Now? Discover the fate of AWOL games, and our full review next issue.

Review every game according to merit. If it's a player-only wargame, then we'll judge the merit criteria. Additionally, we'll match the reviewer who is passionate about that game and who is an expert in their field.

Always give you our honest opinion. Our concern is to tell you whether a game is good or not. Our reputation relies upon it.

Review game code that is sanctioned as complete by its publisher. All UK magazines receive pre-production master discs that are sent by the game publisher. This procedure at reviews are available at the same time copies arrive in the shops. Nevertheless, review game code without official permission if it is the finished article.

THE PCG AWARD

The PC GAMER's badge of honour. We use it to denote any game that we think simply has to be played by all fans of the genre. A Must Buy means the state of the art and is a place in any game collection.

A must score at

least 80% to receive

the award.

Itself.

Excellent

Very good

Good

Very good

THE LORD OF THE RINGS THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH

Will it be Dwarfed by the opposition?

Rarely does a game feel this frustrating. Here's an example: my Rohirrim archer cavalry are piling arrow after arrow into Mordor's dark towers. They sit out of range, laughing to themselves at impotent orcs cut down as the fortifications crumble. Right click, move on to attack the next. Without warning my men rush in to the fray, disobeying my direct orders. They're cut down instantly. Their corpses left to rot in Middle-Earth's mud.

Or try this, an early level: the Rohirrim are on the attack again. There are no flaming arrows this time round, but the buildings spew back fire, wilting my attackers. Meanwhile, at the back

of the base an Uruk Pit streams out enemy infantry leaving my archers vulnerable. The only tactic: continually produce cavalry to counter, using them to charge in and out, nullifying the computer's dumb, dumb spawning.

This takes half an hour. I sit, clenching teeth, tearing at the mouse, praying they make it. At last, they do. VICTORIOUS! My score is totted up, clearly I'm an orc crushing god. Then it's on to the next mission: exactly the same scenario; exactly the same problems; requiring exactly the same solution. Except this time the darkened coal background has been replaced with grassland.

Or maybe this: playing as Mordor, I've isolated a Rohan outpost. The men inside cower at my mighty ballistae as they ravage the outside walls. With the defences down, siege ladders are deployed, enabling Uruk-hai to scale the walls. But an ominous pot of dynamite sits to one side, waiting for a match or flaming arrow. The spark hits, blowing the wall apart and sending the wretched elves manning the turrets spinning to their doom. At once it's thrilling, spectacular and utterly violent.

Thumbnail Review

Relive the battles from either side of the Uruk pikes

- Hobbits
- Wizards
- Orcs
- Space Marines

Shoddy AI and bizarre design destroy any sense of atmosphere created by the astonishing presentation.



How can this be? How can something this beautiful be found in something this flawed?

The only thing left after an extended stay in Middle-Earth is frustration. Frustration with a game that should have been so outstanding, that should have been one of the finest strategy games of the year. Frustration that the world's largest publisher has imposed their impossibly high production standards onto a game that

doesn't deserve the licence. Beneath the flash, the sampled voices, orchestral score,

A game that doesn't deserve the licence

magnificent landscapes and monstrous animation lies a mess of inexplicable design decisions, bizarre mechanics, Fisher Price strategy and a strange disregard for

Tolkien's story.

The good: this game is immediately engaging. When two armies clash you're drawn through the screen, into the

combat. While the game never approaches the scale of the armies in *Rome: Total War* (or indeed the lavish *LotR* promotional screenshots), it is still beautiful. It's to do with sound, mostly. You're surrounded by the noise of war: screams, violence and industry. Every moment drips atmosphere, be it skirmishing in the driving rain of Rohan or creeping through the Mines of Moria, driving out Goblins, Cave Trolls and the mighty Balrog.

Meanwhile, much of the traditional real-time strategy fat has been stripped away, leaving nothing but war. Resource management has been vastly simplified compared to *Warcraft* or even *WH40K: Dawn of War*. If you want cash, build a farm, a foundry, or a lumber mill. There's no need to worry about sending peons out to harvest: they'll happily produce goods in situ. More good: there's no worrying about balancing your supplies. Each encampment produces a catch-all currency, there is no specific wood, iron or food, just cash. The result of this is a pure focus on combat. Gaining a foothold is less about the economy and more about gathering a mixed brigade of troops and sending them

FABLED

Heroes come in all shapes and sizes...

The heroes are gathering, but what use are they in the forthcoming battle?



Treebeard and the Ents will appear at Entmoots when Rohan is attacked. Unfortunately, they prove to be about as useful as a twig at Mount Doom.

TAKE IT APART

"So much for the defences..."



The white wizard will fling globes of fire, knocking troops straight off their feet. Kills all known



Legolas is a bit like William Tell, with pointy ears. Stand him on top of your defensive walls and let him kebab Uruks from a distance.

THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH



The eye of Sauron roams the battlefield, groaning about "Seeing You". He's all mouth and no arms.

forward. Even more good: the interface that manages this army is spectacular. It feels object orientated rather than menu driven. If you want a new collection of Uruk-hai, just click on their pit and an icon will appear. One more click, and your horde is born.

Best of all, emphasis is placed on upgrading your troops. When resources are plentiful you can invest in stronger armour, sharper weapons and a banner to promote your cause. The banner is pivotal. When the White Hand of Mordor, (or the Horse's Head of Rohan) is raised, your troops will automatically heal in their spare time.

Your army is born of these concepts. First a fortress and a workshop, then your tools: a division or so of infantry, some cave-trolls and Ents, accompanied by a hero. Then, to war. And then the frustration hits.

The opposition AI appears not to have evolved since the original *Command & Conquer* arrived ten



years ago. The computer will happily dribble out small groups of troops to die fruitlessly against your defences. Streams and streams of basic infantry will bash up against your walls before being quickly struck down without you lifting a finger. After skirmishing against extraordinary silicon

minds on the battlefields of *Rome* or the *Warhammer* worlds this is a major disappointment.

More: the numbers in your army are limited by your 'command points' and the 'veterancy' of your barracks. Command points are accrued during the game in response to

capturing areas of Middle-Earth. By the time you're knocking on the walls of Helm's Deep you can control masses of soldiers but early on you're limited to six or seven groups.

The problem comes when playing as the Rohan, taking on the forces of Mordor. There's a huge, gaping design hole here. Only the upgraded troops, such as archers with the flaming arrow upgrade, will cause any damage. Yet, once enough men have been purchased to upgrade the barracks, you've hit the army numbers limit.

The only option is to cull your older troops in suicidal attacks that have little purpose other than to create room for the new guys. No wonder the peasants look so reluctant to serve under Eomer.

Here is a more fundamental fault. There is precious little strategy in this strategy game. Battles are won through the sustained, inexorable pressure of force and little else. Quick wits rarely factor. Why? It's partly

"And they call this a mine... a mine!"

...of Moria tour: Open now. You have to be taller than this line for entry.



The goblins first attack across the bridge. They're quickly felled with a few sword swipes from Boromir and Legolas. The hobbits stand back, chucking rocks.



The Cave Troll is a major disappointment. He's knocked back by a few blasts from Gandalf's staff, before Gimli wades in with his axe.



Then comes the Balrog. Gandalf is barely affected by the assault, banishing horn-head to the depths. Hang on, this isn't what we remember.



Dozens of crossbow bearing Uruks are needed to bring down an Ent. Orc rush!



Buildings are placed on the grey circles within camps. Defensive forts are rare.

to the lack of significantly interesting units. Cavalry charge at the enemy and little else. Archers or bowmen wade in. Archers or bowmen deal out damage afar. It's left to the heroes – such as Gandalf, Boromir or Legolas – to add some spice. They keep them close to your side. Keeping them close to your side can prove useful: they do more damage when a local legend on their side, but fundamentally, most of their enemies come down to this: units with a bigger health bar and the ability to kill any fictional unit in one hit.

This is supposed to be a fantasy world, a place defined by creation. The lack of it shown character development is near fatal. What's more, using the wonders is a trial, even the keyboard shortcuts. The workings of these powers are not demonstrated during

the occasional missions where you control a small group of heroes. The opening level, where you control Gandalf in the face of the Balrog, is a good example. This should be a pivotal moment, the defining encounter of the Fellowship.

In *Battle for Middle-Earth*, it's a disaster. This is the literal extent of your involvement. Click power icon a. Click Balrog. Click power icon b. Click Balrog. Wait for the recharge. Repeat. Win.

Yet this must be repeated: there are some astonishing moments. Sieges remain next to perfect. The humans nearly always find themselves at the pointy end of an Uruk pike advance, so must retreat. Manning the walls with flame arrows and trebuchets, pinning back siege ladders and

battering rams is a simple pleasure, directing that assault close to sublime. Such attacks follow a ritual: first catapults wear down the defences before the attack.

Then come the explosive charges, dragged into place by a pair of Uruks. That's the moment to counter. Any flame reaching the barrel will cause it to erupt, scattering armies of both sides to the four corners of the screen. Some levels even enable you to hammer nearby towers, causing them to crash through the walls, creating

a jagged gap. If only the rest of *Battle for Middle-Earth* could live up to these brief sorties.

And that's the problem. *Battle for Middle-Earth* has so much to live up to. It's the first real chance for the spirit of the books and the films to be reflected in a PC game. The massive backdrop of *Middle-Earth* has been squandered, producing a dismally average strategy game, and nothing more.

This game doesn't love its source material, as *Rome* or *Dawn of War* does. It doesn't love the source material as much as you or I. And that's the biggest frustration of all.

TIM EDWARDS

Dismally average and nothing more

PCGAMER High flying action and high drama

IT'S Flawed ▶ A major disappointment
Immaculately presented

IT'S NOT Precious ▶ Complex
Intelligent

Hobbled

73%



MEN OF VALOUR

"Do you think my methods are unsound, Willard?"

Mostly it's the little things. Such as the fact that in *Call of Duty* all enemies drop their weapon when they die. Common sense. If you didn't swap out the weapon, you at least pilfered the ammo. *Men of Valour*, footnote to *Medal of Honour* and latest in a recent lineage of misjudged Vietnam games, does things differently. Why? Well, no reason. Seems like it's just being pig-headed.

For a while, though, everything seems fine. Mission briefings unravel 'Nam archetypes and in-game you follow the ubiquitous objective-compass to find the next foe. As the fight progresses through burned-out wastelands and trashed villages you search the bodies of the fallen for pickups. This isn't particularly interesting, but adds a new twist to the medkit and ammo clip hoovering. You even pick up some clunky Soviet weaponry here and there. But

after a while you begin to sense that something is wrong. What could it be? It's this: you haven't got any ammo. Worse, your enemies aren't dropping any

ammo, and their weapons have vanished in a puff of logic. Soon you have nothing. Should I assault that machinegun nest with no health and

the butt of my rifle? Sure thing! Marines are made of stern stuff. But they are not, it seems, made of fun. *MoV* is a big game, which is commendable, but the multi-

ON THE DISC Take a stroll down the Ho Chi Minh trail yourself with our *Valourous* demo > Demos

part levels cannot be saved and you have to play through a whole mission to open up the next. Be anything but miserly with your ammo and you're going nowhere.

Yeah, this is a balancing issue. The designers need to sprinkle in a bit more ammo here and there and make sure all your foes drop their beloved AKs. But frankly we don't need to buy broken games in the hope that someone has the decency to patch them into playability at a later date. It's simply not acceptable.

Arriving with whiffs of dope paranoia

BIG CHOPPER

Tour of duty

Jungle wars are nothing compared to jazz sieges



Out of the APC and WHAM! BOOM! SHRAK! The 'Cong know you're here and they're not best pleased.



Meet up with the rest of the guys at the Hamlet and begin the clearance. Brutal stuff, but necessary. Hopefully.



Extraction means getting to the chopper without getting your legs removed. Man that gun!



Sarge is still on the ground so the chopper circles and you lay down fire while you wait for him to sort his life out.

TAKEN APART

Storming a bridge over troubled water



There is still much to enjoy, ugh. Indeed, if MoV had been finished you would have enjoyed occasionally well-scripted motor that conveys some of the ridiculous, violent, unpredictable battle horror that endowed the Vietnam war with its unique brand of ugly intensity. screaming Vietcong stream from the jungle, mortars whirr and crack into the rice paddies with a percussive impact akin to a kick to the brain. The cutscenes work you squint a bit, and if you can choke down the fact that the whole world is clearly waiting for you to trigger it into action, then there's a pretty broad range of squad-based situations to overcome. While it's less

imaginative than *Pacific Assault*, the combat is generally more entertaining, and the 'Nam game world isn't showing any signs of WWII fatigue just yet.

The chatter between your soldiers is uncharacteristically coarse and amusing. The opening micro-drama of escorting a war-reporter and cameraman through trap-filled villages in the Vietnamese scrub sets the tone for the whole game; insults are traded and friends are blown into meat chunks the size of your fist. The jungle village fights are spiced with the kind of close-quarters brutality that made *Call of Duty* so compelling. Some of the setpieces are strong too, including the river sequences

which arrive with whiffs of dope paranoia and a long sideways glance at *Apocalypse Now*. This whole section is grim and evocative, but it quickly descends into a broken quagmire of irritation, infuriating the persistent player with its illogical ammo balancing and vacant AI.

It's clear there is space for a genuinely genre-breaking Vietnam game, something that will shock and engross like other

great shooters, something that will capture the rock 'n' roll and drugs 'n' butchery that made Vietnam the defining conflict of the Cold War. But this isn't it. You know, I love the smell of napalm in the morning, but I hate the smell of rushed releases, clumsy game design and the kind of absurd mismanagement that results in lost opportunities like this. Smells like... defeat.

JIM ROSSIGNOL

PCGAMER Blasts of fun marred by attrition

IT'S ➤ Green ➤ Tripwire
➤ Shrapnel

IT'S NOT ➤ Dope ➤ Slick
➤ Smooth

Ambushed

78%

LEISURE SUIT LARRY MAGNA CUM LAUDE

Not Al Lowe, but a new low



One of the rhythm action dance games. Which are naff.



There is no excuse. There is no reason good enough for something as foul, hateful and pathetic as this unmitigated, spiteful, venomous excrement to have ever gotten past a wretchedly stupid idea being suggested by whichever bigoted insult to humankind first vomited it in the direction of a publisher.

This isn't a jokey, comedy opening. This isn't John 'They're Back' Walker's faux-shock at a slightly naughty adult game. This is ANGER. *Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude* is a deeply unpleasant exercise in misogyny.

You're playing the nephew of Al Lowe's silly creation, Larry, made hideous by a development team with no understanding of what the original slightly naughty adult games were about. And you're the same sort of unpleasant, nerdy ne'er-do-well, taking part in auditions for a television dating show (something that the Larry series already did, troublingly). But in this show, in order to progress through the process, you

must try to shag as many women as you can.

Obviously Lowe's *Larry* games ostensibly shared a similar goal, although the hapless Larry almost never got laid. But in this university setting, *all* women are portrayed as naïve morons, either objects to be screwed, or subjects of derision. If they're to be targets for Larry's attention, they must have big enough tits or display a depth of stupidity that most would recognise as a mental handicap, generally both.

Girls are 'wooed' into these situations through a series of mini-'games' - a mixture of running around puzzles, or rhythm-response games. None of these efforts are competently coded, with glitches hindering any notion of applying skill. The purpose is to lure girls into your bed by completing lying games, and then getting them so drunk that they almost pass out through

a drinking game. And then, in this vulnerable position, Larry attempts to have sex with them, with what are supposedly attempts at hilarious consequences. One turns out to

have a penis! One will only have sex if you're wearing a tree-costume! And at the very lowest depth of this sub-aquatic misery, is the drunk and very disturbed girl whom Larry tricks into having sex with a dildo strapped to a teddy bear.

These are meant to be jokes. It's clear that the developers thought it was funny. And very occasionally, rushing around completing mini-games can seem

like mild entertainment. If you succeed, you get to see the cartoon lady's boobies - that doesn't seem so awful. However the broken mini-games, and horrible scenarios soon put a stop to any amusement.

The insidious, hateful attitude doesn't stop at women. Of the two male black characters, one is a pimp, and the other is mentally ill. An astonishingly derisory comment is made when looking at the door to the "PC Hammer-African-American Studies" (shudder). And xenophobia is rife throughout.

The original *Larrys* were rude but in the end they did nothing to offend. This is pure offence. Just don't.

JOHN WALKER

A deeply unpleasant exercise in misogyny

PCGAMER A sick joke. Hateful and wretched

IT'S ➤Hateful ➤Offensive
➤Bigoted

IT'S NOT ➤Big ➤Clever
➤Or funny

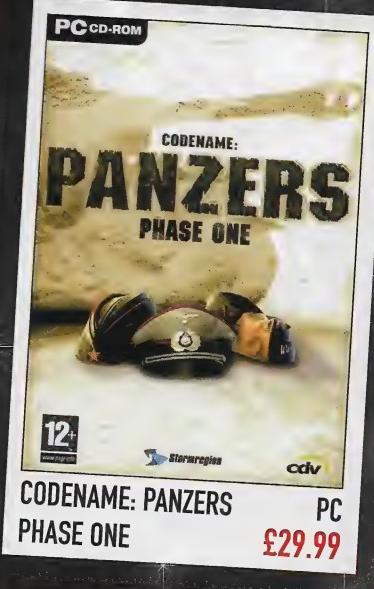
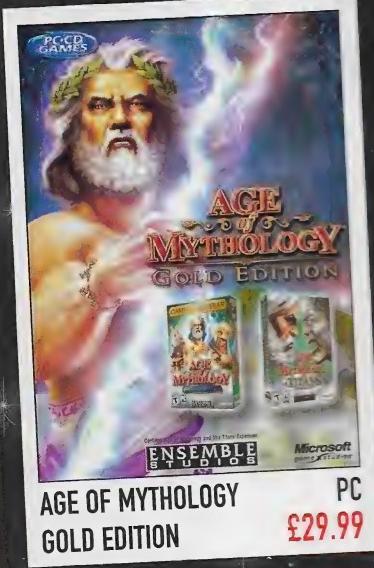
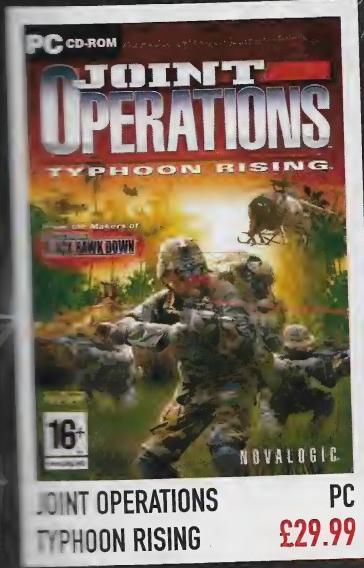
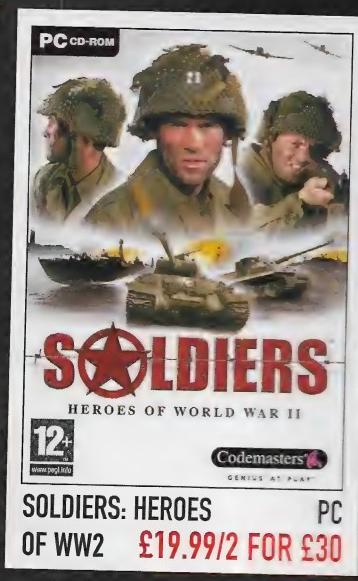
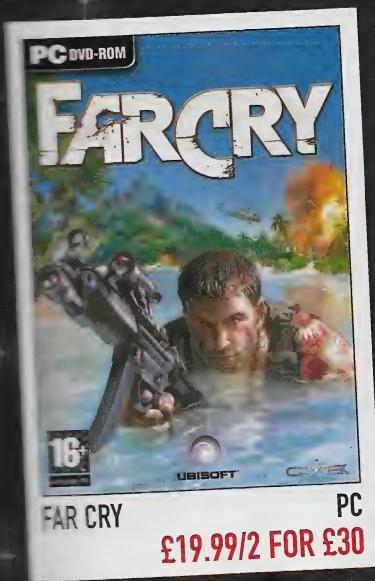
Loathsome

03%

megastore

virgin.com/megastore

Best of 2004



GET £500 OF VIRGIN VOUCHERS WHEN YOU SPEND £20

MEGASTORES VS SILENT NIGHTS

World of Virgin vouchers offer valid between November 8th and December 24th 2004 - see instore for details. Details and prices correct at time of going to press. Prices may vary online and in Eire.

Unreal® Tournament 2004 © 2004 Epic Games, Inc. Unreal and the Unreal logo are registered trademarks of Epic Games Inc. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. Unreal Tournament 2004

Published and Distributed by Atari Europe S.A.



(Above) Playing the percentages.



(Above) Choose your tactics here.



LMA PROFESSIONAL MANAGER 2005

Not the worst Brian Clough sim, but it's in the Bottom One

For some, they're little more than fiddling with a footy database. For others, they're the chance to completely immerse yourself for months in the joys of, well, fiddling with a footy database. It's always hard explaining quite why football management works as a game. Still, as *LMA* doesn't work that well anyway, the next few hundred words shouldn't be too hard. Except on Codemasters.

The first thing you notice, from but a cursory glance at certain teams, are a few too many inaccuracies in the way *LMA* translates the real world into its database. Players classified in the wrong positions, for example. At Man U, starting left and right backs Heinze and Gary Neville are both listed as centre backs. And when I tracked down

American teen prodigy Freddy Adu, I found he's aged 24 and only rated 22/100.

It's not just that these errors grate. They deny the player one of the fundamental pleasures of the genre: applying their real-life knowledge to reshape the destiny of a team.

Now, arguably, this kind of thing can be patched – what's beyond saving is the rest of *LMA*.

Take the 3D match engine. Ugly and laborious, it gives you a dozen hotkeys with which to shout orders at your side and feels more like a footy-themed game of Simon than serious sports management. Your only other option is to turn on the 2D Quick Match – a ridiculously rapid view

of nine constantly changing percentage points spread across a pitch from which you're supposed to divine how the match is going.

Tactically, *LMA* is slightly more satisfying but still doesn't offer anything like the scope of Sports Interactive's recent titles. A few basic formations can be tweaked by giving individuals orders, but it remains simplistic and you're always left wanting more control.

The same could be said for your dealings in the transfer market, where the inadequate searching and scouting functions are only outdone by the weak negotiating. Holding these elements together is a somewhat clumsy interface.

I was expecting a fun footy boss sim, and looking forward to a respite from all the weighty concerns that come with the *Champ Mans* of this world. Instead, this underpowered, ungainly port only left me hankering after the real thing.

CHRIS BUXTON

The matches feel more like a game of Simon

PCGAMER Maybe the amateur version is better...

IT'S

- Inaccurate
- Inadequate
- A chore to navigate

IT'S NOT

- A looker
- Deep
- A serious title challenger

Beleaguered

47%

VAMPIRE® THE MASQUERADE BLOODLINES™



Choose to swear allegiance to 1 of 7 different clans, then use an array of vampire powers to complete quests and gain experience.



Witness the destructive power of your weapons, guns, swords and supernatural vampire powers, in both first-person and third-person gameplay.



Get sucked in to the streets of Los Angeles, where the options are endless and the dangers are boundless.



I return with the pain,
I get it, but you'd better hold on to your end of the deal.
No deal. Tell me what you know.
I've heard enough out of you. I'll rip the info from your pretty little hide.

Interact with mortals and other vampires in a world that reacts to clan, gender and dialogue in this deep, immersive RPG.

"One of the most anticipated RPGs this year" —Gamespot



**PC
CD**



powered by
source

ACTIVISION

activision.com

vampirebloodlines.com

Wolf Publishing, Inc. Vampire: The Masquerade and the World of Darkness are registered trademarks and Vampire: The Masquerade—Bloodlines is a trademark of White Wolf Publishing. © 2004 Activision, Inc. Published by Activision Publishing, Inc. Activision is a registered trademark of Activision, Inc. All rights reserved. Developed by Troika Games, LLC. This product contains violence. © 2004 Valve Corporation. All rights reserved. Valve, Half-Life, Source and the Source logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Valve Corporation. The NVIDIA logo and the "The way it's meant to be played" logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of NVIDIA Corporation. All other trademarks and trade names are the properties of their respective owners.

WORMS FORTS UNDER SIEGE

Not much better than the Steven Seagal movie you're thinking of



Despite the apparent variety of weapons, they nearly all just blow stuff up.

CRAZY

Not just wacky, also zany

Under Siege does its best to maintain the humour that's been a Wormy trademark for nearly ten years



You take the role of an Egyptian priest's assistant fighting against the Pharaoh and his army. As a rebel brigade, you could say these worms have turned...



But rather like my aim, the humour is hit-and-miss. The weapons are tittersome at first, but it's a bit odd to have the homing pigeon and old lady in these environments.



Maybe I'm getting old, but squeaky voices exclaiming "Oh, no!" just don't do it for me now. In 1995, hilarious. Alongside Half-Life 2 and Counter-Strike, it's all a bit silly.



For years, multiplayer gaming didn't get much finer than *Worms*. Its surreal proposition – killer cartoon worms with helium voices – suited 90's 2D gaming despite a perennially woeful single-player mode that has never been satisfactorily addressed in nearly ten years of sequels. But with more multiplayer interactions to choose from than ever, what hope is there for *Worms* today? It's a question Team 17 have huffed and puffed away to answer. In doing so, they've over-complicated what was a perfect formula.

Don't get me wrong; it's still great fun to pit your team of four worm wrigglers against a mate's in a turn-based fight to the death. Barring the obligatory new weapons to complement returning favourites, the concept of building fortifications is the only thing that can be deemed genuinely 'new'. It's fairly straightforward, too: the landscape around each team's starting position is dotted with enemy locations, build a fort on one to add it to your total. The more you control, the larger the team you can build. The larger the team the more powerful the

weapon can be deployed from it. And because destroying the enemy's starting fort is usually a mission goal, the traditional *Worms* dynamic diverges from just hammering

BOOMTIME

Put away the AK

It wouldn't be *Worms* without silly weapons, would it?



Chilli Con Carnage – you see what they did – consists of a sleepy Mexican who, upon being propelled at the enemy, explodes.



Ordinary mortar? Never. This fires what could be a bishop at the enemy, who explodes into three bibles that explode.



The Flying Fridge Full of Frozen Ferrets is catapulted at the enemy, the fridge explodes, the ferrets eject and then explode.



The Giant Laser. Put simply, it's aimed and fired and causes massive damage over several seconds. Targets often explode.

enemy worms to blowing up their structures, too.

In one sense, building and expanding fortifications in order to access more powerful weapons is a good idea; strategy games usually prosper through complexity. There's always a warm feeling when hard groundwork results in access to top-end power. But *Worms* has never been more than a hysterical, simplistic arcade game.

But if *Worms Forts*' main innovation is limited in its success, there are several further factors negatively impacting that angry red number. For a start, I could scarcely believe, in my first



The smallest tower can only accommodate weak weapons like this.

by the camera hitting scenery, which caused my worm to dive into lethal water more than once.

Still flaws can become fondly remembered features about half a dozen games into a series. Either way, AI worms are still either moronic or lethal. They'll jump into walls; move towards but fail to collect pick-ups or (more usually) they'll deliver weapon payloads pixel-perfectly across the map. Getting pummelled by human opponents is one thing: knowing a computer-controlled enemy is cheating makes me want

Swings more than a bored suburban housewife

to stab the power button in vengeance frustration.

The four historical themes (Roman, Egyptian, Medieval and Oriental) plus lacklustre humour add little to *Worms Forts*' appeal. It now seems clear that *Worms 3D* was the apogee of the concept. It was some achievement to take the game successfully into the third dimension and Team 17 could justifiably have called it a day after that. This? It's little more than flogging a dead worm.

ROSS ATHERTON

PC GAMER Should have left well enough alone

IT'S

More Worms in 3D Still good fun in multiplayer Got a new trick

IT'S NOT

A great trick Like it used to be Any good in single-player at all

Crumbling

60%

CORPORAL BIG DADDY

LEFT US FAR
TOO SOON WHEN THE
NUMB NUTS OPERATING THE
KEYBOARD ACCIDENTALLY
HIT THE RELOAD BUTTON
INSTEAD OF THE ONE
FOR GRENADE.

WITHOUT A ZBOARD, YOU'RE TOAST.

IN A GAME LIKE MEDAL OF HONOR: PACIFIC ASSAULT™, YOU HAVE TO MOVE FAST OR DIE. THAT'S WHY YOU NEED ZBOARD™. THE WORLD'S FIRST INTERCHANGEABLE CUSTOM KEYBOARD SYSTEM. ZBOARD'S LIMITED EDITION MEDAL OF HONOR: PACIFIC ASSAULT KEYBOARD IS CUSTOMIZED FOR YOU TO CHANGE WEAPONS FAST. RELOAD OR JUST GET THE HELL OUT OF THE WAY. NO MORE FUMBLING THROUGH MANUALS OR DROPPING GRENADES WHEN YOU SHOULD BE CROUCHING. WITH ZBOARD'S CUSTOM GRAPHICS AND LABELED COMMANDS, IT'S ALL RIGHT THERE IN FRONT OF YOU. IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR AN EDGE IN MEDAL OF HONOUR: PACIFIC ASSAULT, CHECK OUT ZBOARD.COM FOR MORE DETAILS.



ZBOARD™
YOUR MOST LETHAL WEAPON

AVAILABLE AT:
 www.chipsworld.co.uk

amazon.co.uk
and you're done.

PC WORLD
The Computer Company

STAR WARS GALAXIES JUMP TO LIGHTSPEED

Putting the Star Wars back into Galaxies



A lone TIE Fighter prepares for death.



The Firespray: often used by pirates.



This first expansion pack for *Star Wars Galaxies* has been long awaited: the first information about *Jump to Lightspeed* appeared before the game actually launched. Ever since, players have complained about the lack of Star Wars feeling and authenticity in *Galaxies*. *Jtl* puts that right with the introduction of star ship combat.

Players of the old *X-Wing vs TIE Fighter* games who own a decent joystick will feel right at home, as combat greatly differs from the target-and-click system employed in the ground game.

New pilots can choose to fly with the Rebel or Imperial forces, or as a Freelancer working for one of many local security factions such as the RSF on Naboo or the Rsecos on Corellia. Faction size limits you to certain ship types as you progress up the



ranks. Freelancers, for example, are the only ones who can fly the Millennium Falcon-esque YT-1300, while Imperials get a wide selection of TIEs to oppress the poor Rebels. Boba Fett's infamous Slave I also appears in the form of the Kuat Systems Firespray.

The new Shipwright crafting profession is akin to the already established crafting system of SWG, enabling players to craft a great number of components and ship deeds. The sheer number of resources required is overwhelming at first (over five million units are needed to master it) although anyone already used to the Weaponsmith or Armoursmith professions may actually relish the hours of

searching for specific resources all over the galaxy. Alongside the Shipwright, two new races are available: the Ithorians and Sullustans, familiar from the films

as Hammerhead and Nien Numb respectively.

Although, there is no option to change the race of established

characters. New

Ithorian clothing may refresh the Tailor profession, while long suffering Droid Engineers now have deeds available to help out in

the space race.

Jtl offers a whole new world of fun and should entice many new players to *Galaxies*, but it has faults. Server lag has increased since the expansion's launch, making space combat difficult and frustrating. Moreover, severely diminishing datapad storage for new waypoints in space is an oversight, and some interface control issues between ground and space games can be annoying alongside the inevitable minor bugs that will eventually be fixed.

ANDY MCGREGOR

Imperials get a wide selection of TIEs

PCGAMER Largely delivers on its promise

IT'S

- > Gorgeous
- > Time consuming
- > Very Star Wars

IT'S NOT

- > Easy
- > Bug free
- > As good as it could have been

Spacey

77%



(Below) Ouch! Those little picket fences can be deadly.



XPAND RALLY

If only it did

Fantastic games are easy to review: you just let your heart pound the keyboard. And terrible games are easy to review: you tear out the creator's heart, pound at the keyboard with that. But OK games, reasonable games, decent-but-not-exceptional games... here the devil resides, but only on occasional weekends and right now, you know, he's away. No redemption. No brimstone. And all around is twilight and silent.

How about a nice cup of tea? *Xpand Rally* is pretty good. Not incredible. But nice. None of the cars are licensed, but they're easily recognisable as the likes of the Ford Focus, Mini Cooper, Mitsubishi Lancer, Subaru Impreza – hey, would you like a biscuit? – VW Golf and Peugeot 206, rally classics all.

More curious (and more difficult to control) are the small selection of soft-roaders, those funny new estate/MPV/4WD mongrels like the Volvo, erm, car that – despite an advert featuring a semi-catatonic, brace-wearing teenage surfer talking about shark

attacks – will only ever be bought by plaintive, slope-shouldered middle management husk-people. Yet in *Xpand Rally*, tuned to absurd levels, these vehicles are actually good fun to drive around in. Wait, I think I've got some bourbons somewhere.

Whoever named the cars should be straight-armed – thwack! – into a ravine. The Mini Cooper is a 'Tiny Hooper,' The Ford Focus a 'Centre Cord'... is that brimstone I smell? Yet the stages benefit massively from their fictional licence, and you can easily sling your car into that ravine, which is obviously funny. Even on the simulation setting, speeds are vast and the road grip is prodigious.

Xpand Rally is unashamedly arcade biased, which means immediate but slightly uninvolving action. One sugar? Oh... the lumps have fused, would you like three? You must pass through checkpoints, but unusually you're free to wander

considerable distances off the road in between, taking huge shortcuts. They're not necessarily easy though, as rocks and trees hidden in the long grass can do substantial damage to both car and driver. Heavy impacts darken the screen as whiplash hails you a

quick cab to unconsciousness, and extreme collisions see your car explode. Which is... quite... nice. Mmm, flames! But no lakes of fire. I'll just get a doily for your saucer, shall I?

So you race multi-stage rallies, single challenges and head-to-heads for your challenger's car. It's not the WRC, and hooray. Nothing's artificially locked, so if you've got the cash (you can flog unwanted cars) for the right

vehicle, you can enter later events without doing everything in between. Neat.

Tuning is also nicely done, with components such as quicker gearboxes, noisier exhausts and punchier turbos making noticeable differences. Not only will you be able to hear the change, but see it in relation to the ghost car racing you even in simulation mode.

A ghost car in simulation? If it offends you, pluck it out, but given the overall nature of the game you'll probably rather appreciate it. I found it quite useful, for which I politely applaud – it's all really very OK. Xtremely pleasant. But you haven't touched your tea! Or said a word! That shadow... is you, isn't it?

STEVE WILLIAMS

Wait, I
think I've
got some
bourbons

PCGAMER The bass player of the rally band

IT'S

- Fast
- Satisfying
- Challenging

IT'S NOT

- Essential
- Well-named
- A brave new world

Xpedient

74
%

■ Price €40 ■ Release Out now ■ Publisher TBA ■ Developer Techland ■ They say 1.3GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card ■ We say 2GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 128Mb 3D card
■ Multiplayer Internet, LAN, up to four ■ Link www.xpandrally.com ■ Influenced by V-Rally 3, Rally Championship Xtreme ■ Alternatively CMR 2005, 87%

Can't wait? Don't wait!



Latest Catalogue

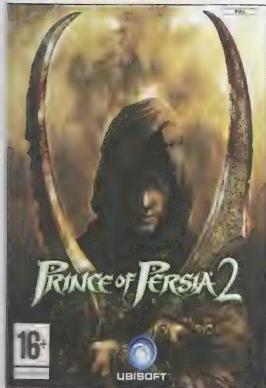
345 4440

Gameplay can deliver every NEW game through your door on day of release



Want to buy with cash?
Apply for a Free Gamepay card

TAKE A PEEK AT THIS MONTH'S HOT RELEASES



Prince of Persia - Warrior Within
Out: December

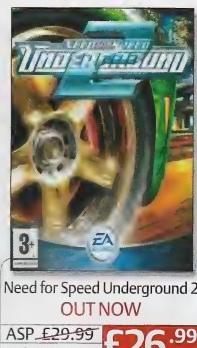
ASP £34.99 **£26.99**
Code: RM01330



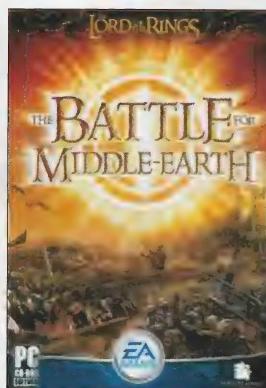
Zoo Tycoon 2
OUT NOW
ASP £34.99 **£27.99**
Code: RM01593



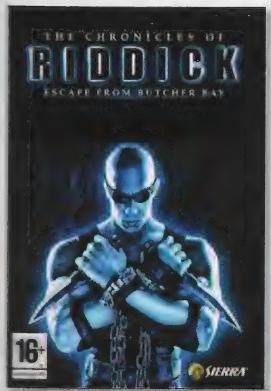
Medal of Honor - Pacific Assault
DVD Rom
OUT NOW
ASP £34.99 **£26.99**
Code: RM00865



Need for Speed Underground 2
OUT NOW
ASP £29.99 **£26.99**
Code: RM01511

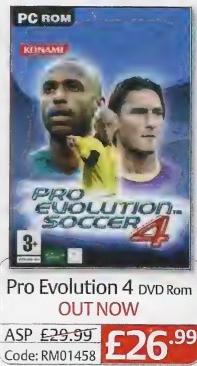


LOTR - Battle for Middle Earth
DVD Rom OUT: December
ASP £34.99 **£27.99**
Code: RM00946



The Chronicles of Riddick - Escape from Butcher Bay OUT: Dec

ASP £34.99 **£26.99**
Code: RM01678



Pro Evolution 4 DVD Rom
OUT NOW
ASP £29.99 **£26.99**
Code: RM01458



Sid Meier's Pirates!
OUT NOW
ASP £29.99 **£24.99**
Code: RM01336



Football Manager 2005
OUT NOW
ASP £34.99 **£24.99**
Code: RM00999



Half Life 2 - DVD Rom
OUT NOW

ASP £34.99 **£29.99**
Code: RM00327

Saitek X52 Flight Stick and Throttle

- Precision engineering, ergonomic design and detailed fusion of features combine to deliver maximum aeronautical authenticity.
- Illuminated buttons and MFD - ideal for low light environments
- Rubber grips and ergonomic design for increased comfort and fatigue-free gaming
- Part metal construction for increased durability and authenticity
- Includes voice recognition software - the ideal accompaniment for on-line multiplayer gaming



ASP £99.99
Only **£89.99**
Code: RM01518

Gameplay is the UK's largest direct to home games specialist

> Free Delivery within the UK > Nothing to pay until the game is on it's way

call: 0845 345 4440 local rate

open 7 days mon-fri: 9am-8pm sat: 9am - 5.30pm

www.gameplay.co.uk

on-line shopping: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

 **gameplay™**
THE GATEWAY TO GAMES

PRINCE OF PERSIA WARRIOR WITHIN

Or 'Duba Dubya' as we've affectionately nicknamed it



Thumbnail Review

Arabian Nights fantasy meets platform perfection.

- Slo-mo
- Atmosphere
- Escher-like levels
- Stubble

Acrobatic combat and exhilarating action reinvent the platformer.

Now, two, three or even four enemies can be tackled at the same time.

Two blades have just sprung up from the ground, slicing the air as they 180. At the end of the corridor, a Sand Warrior waits. He's waiting for me to run and duck underneath the blades, right into his waiting sword. He'll be disappointed. I take the side route: I run and hit the wall at an angle, carrying myself over the blades, at a right-angle to the wall. Just for effect, I slip into slo-mo. I want to enjoy this. Before I come

out of the run, I jump and fly towards the dust bunny. He doesn't know what's hit him, mostly because I've just passed straight through him. Ha.

A few months on from the *Sands of Time*, *Warrior Within* returns the Prince of Persia to us. He's in serious trouble and he shouldn't be alive: messing with the timeline in the previous game has had some serious consequences and now he's trying to escape the Dahaka, a creature

hellbent on restoring the universe to its natural order by removing our hero from it.

It sounds grittier, and it is. From the grim lighting to the stubbled Prince and the visceral action, this is a far tougher Prince trying to outrun death incarnate.

Ubisoft have stripped the tweeness right out of *Prince of Persia* and given our swashbuckling hero a 1,000-yard stare and a killer instinct. They've also, praise whatever deity you

choose to worship, retained some of what made *Sands of Time* the best game of its type.

The early stages introduce a new combat system which Ubisoft are rightly proud of. They've managed to integrate the lithe, athletic personality of the Prince into the fighting in a way *Sands of Time* never quite managed. It's a combo-based twist on the Prince's acrobatic repertoire. Think of the fights as mini-levels where your reactions

FREE RUNNING

He's a monkey... man!

Just in case you need reminding why the Prince is our fave gaming action hero



FLY! There's no need to shuffle into a pixel perfect position – just launch yourself at a gap and he'll do the rest.



STEADY! Even if the worst happens and he falls from this position, he'll grip the side with ease. The man's got cat-like reflexes.

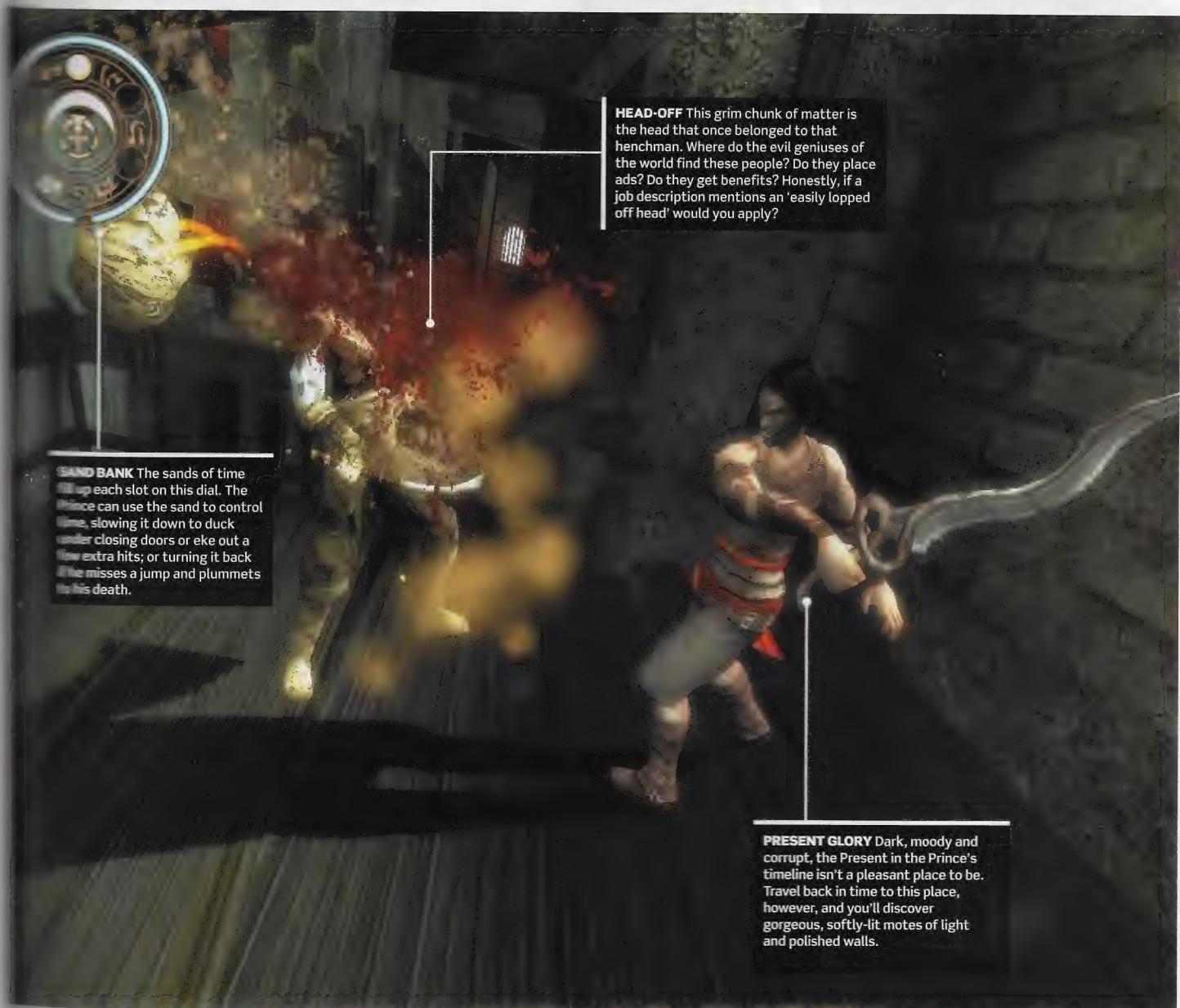


G-ROPE! Handily placed ropes assist the wallrun: he can grip onto a rope mid run then let go and carry on running.



CUT CLOTH! Fall towards a tapestry and he'll slice it with his sword, slowing his descent enough to help him survive.

"Time to Escher in a new action hero"



SAND BANK The sands of time fill up each slot on this dial. The Prince can use the sand to control time, slowing it down to duck under closing doors or eke out a few extra hits; or turning it back if he misses a jump and plummets to his death.

HEAD-OFF This grim chunk of matter is the head that once belonged to that henchman. Where do the evil geniuses of the world find these people? Do they place ads? Do they get benefits? Honestly, if a job description mentions an 'easily lopped off head' would you apply?

PRESENT GLORY Dark, moody and corrupt, the Present in the Prince's timeline isn't a pleasant place to be. Travel back in time to this place, however, and you'll discover gorgeous, softly-lit motes of light and polished walls.

nd instincts are as important as when you're dangling over a gap. Every swipe or thrust can be linked together with ease and any enemy can be used to launch the Prince into the air, enabling him to drop down and seize the initiative with a powerful attack. Your moves are also modified by the number and type of weapons you have at the time, and the odds are always the same: complete and utter carnage. It's brutal: heads fly through the air, torsos separate from their lower halves and you can split targets right down the middle and watch the sides slowly separate. The sheer number of combinations is bewildering, and even when surrounded by enemies, you can always pull a

fast slice, kick or twist that takes off a head.

Even better, the improvements to the combat mean it is no longer necessary to stop when you want to fight. If you're prepared, you can bypass a lot of the waiting minions simply by running past them – a blessed relief from *Sands of Time's* teleporting enemies who managed to catch up with you no matter what. But, as pointed out in the

opening paragraph, you can also slip directly into fight mode when you're on the fly, with barely a pause in the gameplay.

It's this reworking of the fighting system that lifts *Prince of Persia* into a different league.

Combat in the previous game was needlessly complicated. Now it matches the genius of the acrobatics. I was afraid that the fighting would be beefed up at the expense of the free-running action sequences but those fears have been

Pull a slice, kick or twist that takes off a head

gloriously laid to rest. The very best bits are all still present and correct and they've even been joined by a few new additions. An

Errol Flynn-style knife drop sees you sticking a blade into a long sheet of cloth during a fall and slicing your way through it like an oar in water to slow your descent. Then there are the ropes which dangle from the walls, enabling you to either

climb or swing whenever the opportunity arises.

And the Prince still commands time. So it's still possible to reverse nasty tumbles or slow reality in order to make a few extra steps or unleash more hits onto a baddie before he can respond. Add that to the wallrun and the Prince's ability to jump and grip like a monkey, and you have something special.

The Prince is an inspiring, able character that never punishes your enthusiasm for experimenting. And he makes it all so simple. The smooth transition from floor to wall to air to rope is eye-popping.

As the Sands of Time still come into play, there's some Steven Hawking-snubbing timeline bending in the plot. It might



Forgive and forget. Or just knobble her. Your choice.



If the monsters prove too tough, you can always rewind time and have another bash.

leave the physicist's blood boiling but it makes for stunning levels.

The Prince fights on two fronts: the past and the present. Each level is interwoven with the fabric of time so that they are played partly in each timeline.

And though that may sound like a cheap trick to make you play the same level twice, it's actually a great idea that the developers have fully exploited for the good.

The levels of Persia past gleam with the magnificent splendour of a golden age. Surroundings are beautifully crafted and maintained. In contrast, Persia present is decayed and crumbling. Where a trap stood in the past, it could be broken, or mangled into another form in the ugly present.

Take the mechanical tower for example. It's packed with lovely touches: spinning giant cogs, swinging pendulums and walls packed with possibilities. In the past, it's a work of art. It could be an old lady's clock, opened by an expert on the Antique's Roadshow to reveal a portal to clockwork heaven. Made up of cogs and pendulums boosted to gargantuan size, the mechanical tower has a life all of its own. But

HACK AND SLASH

What a carve up

Or how we learned to stop worrying and love the new fighting system. Ahem



The full-body run up is used as a launching pad. Back flip into an opponent or flip over and hold the enemy from behind.



Multiple enemies are easy. Even if auto-targeting locks on the closest, it breaks when you attack in another direction.



Jump over the edge and grab hold of the enemy. As the bad guy falls, the Prince hangs on for dear life.

it's a different story in the present. The years have taken their toll, many of the mechanisms have been stilled but new routes have opened up that weren't available in the past.

Talking of puzzles, the only true downside is that there's less focus on using the Prince as a cog in a machine – it was the Prince's place in

those puzzles that made them so enjoyable. And there are other problems. It's easy to lose track of your goals and location, and the map is useless. The camera occasionally points in the wrong place, and once it even locked at an angle that made guessing the next jump an act of

faith. The lack of a quicksave is also annoying, given how far apart the save points are. Repeating levels is never fun, even when they're as amazingly detailed as this. And the Prince has suffered a personality change – his recent history has scarred him into a harder, more broody Bruce Willis-type.

But these are genre niggles more than anything. *Warrior Within* frequently hits a stride few games even consider. Lara's always had the turning circle of

an elephant and the last *Indiana Jones* felt like you were actually controlling the near pensionable Harrison Ford. With *Sands of Time*, Ubisoft thrust the Prince so far ahead, only they had any chance of catching up.

And catch up they have: improving where necessary and leaving the rest well alone. Don't worry about any bad demo experiences you've had either. This is brilliant, and I want to hug them for it.

CRAIG PEARSON

The present is decayed and crumbling

PC GAMER Platform perfection

IT'S

- ▶ Pretty
- ▶ Royalty
- ▶ On your shopping list

IT'S NOT

- ▶ Unbalanced
- ▶ Sedate
- ▶ For vertigo sufferers

Enduring

91 %

THINK YOU CAN MANAGE?

PREMIER MANAGER 2004 - 2005



www.premiermanager.info

81%

Official Nintendo
Magazine

Buy online at www.zoodigitalpublishing.com

8/10

Cube

PlayStation® 2

GAME BOY ADVANCE

PC CD-ROM

ZOO
Digital Publishing
www.zoodigitalpublishing.com

Published by ZOO Digital Publishing Ltd. © 2004 ZOO Digital Publishing Ltd. ZOO Digital Publishing and the ZOO Digital Publishing logo are trademarks of ZOO Digital Publishing Ltd., part of the ZOO Digital Group plc. All rights reserved.



STARSTRANGER



www.fireglowgames.com

©Copyright 2004 Fireglow Ltd. All rights reserved.

MORTYR II

We shall never surrender! Oh, I give up



Farmer/hiker hostilities reach new level.



Halt! Hammer time.



World War II – now that was a sequel. More weapons, better graphics (some of it was in colour) and more missions. And rocket launchers! You can't argue with that. But for *Mortyr II* to be significantly better than its predecessor, the original would need to be *Pac-Man* with swastikas. Which it wasn't... [hurried shuffling of papers]. No. No it wasn't.

Yet *Mortyr II* isn't quite the coruscating human tragedy WWII was either so, hey, smile. Its heart's in the right place and it's clear the makers cared; it's not just another weary war horse / cash cow (war cow?) exploiting the current popularity of Nazis. Oh no. The trouble is, it's still pretty substandard anyway. At times it's even quite bad, but it's difficult to really resent it. It's like watching a chess club try to throw a ball – you know they're doing their best.

"...myyyy wayyyyargh..."
Always end on a song.



Take the AI-controlled soldiers. It's as if you're fighting a battalion of elite opticians, so good is their eyesight, but this doesn't quite reinforce the need for stealth the way it should. Their 'headless chicken' fighting tactics make sniping boringly long-winded, and you soon find it's easier just to clump in close and blast them to pieces.

Most victims drop health packs and ammo anyway, although the satisfied sighs you make as you 'heal' are actually quite upsetting – in a fierce battle *Mortyr* sounds like some kind of roving pervert. Couple this with the way everyone dies so very sloooooowly in localised pockets of lunar gravity – arms and legs wibbling like the inflated fingers of a rubber glove – and WWII can get quite weird.

What we shall officially designate 'voice achtung' (bad voice acting with accents) doesn't help the generally patchy sound either, and character animations that bravely ignore the existence of knees are breaking the wrong kind of barriers.

Worse, even our sexy 2.2GHz, 1GB RAM, Radeon 9800XT skyscraper of a PC was brought to its knees by *Mortyr II*'s higher settings. This despite it running *Far Cry* like a puddle runs reflections. Expect to trade OK-ish panoramas for noticeable pop ups. Grenade!

Bravely ignoring the existence of knees

Yet none of what *Mortyr II* offers is totally disastrous. Some sections – such as a trip through a frontline trench – are even quite spectacular-ish if you're happy blasting stupid, skipping enemies on a very narrow path. Aptly enough, the developers, Mirage, sometimes make very little action go quite a long way, but they only needed to because their game had such a deeply ungainly engine in the first place.

The result is a game that is reasonable within its limitations, but you'll only be trapped there if you choose this over *Call of Duty* or *Medal of Honour*. So don't.

STEVE WILLIAMS

PCGAMER Needlessly low-budget Nazi-nullifying

IT'S ➤OK ➤Trying to please
➤Unsophisticated

IT'S NOT ➤Clever ➤Well-told
➤Very good

Fatigues

58%

THE OFFICIAL EXPANSION PACK TO THE №1 BEST SELLING ONLINE FPS

THE BATTLE HAS ESCALATED!

JOINT OPERATIONS **ESCALATION** EXPANSION PACK™



Attack enemy camps with the deadly
tank or pilot the Apache attack
copter through artillery fire.

Manoeuvre on dirt bikes
to protect neighbouring bases
from invading ground troops

Spectacular multiplayer levels, including
an abandoned strip mine, waterfall ruins,
a chemical weapons factory, and more!

VALOGIC®
novalogic.com

Requires original game **JOINT OPERATIONS™**,
TYphoon Rising™ to play.
www.jointopsescalation.com

DOLBY DIGITAL
LARGE SCALE
MULTIPLAYER GAMING

16+
www.pegi.info

PC
CD-ROM
SOFTWARE

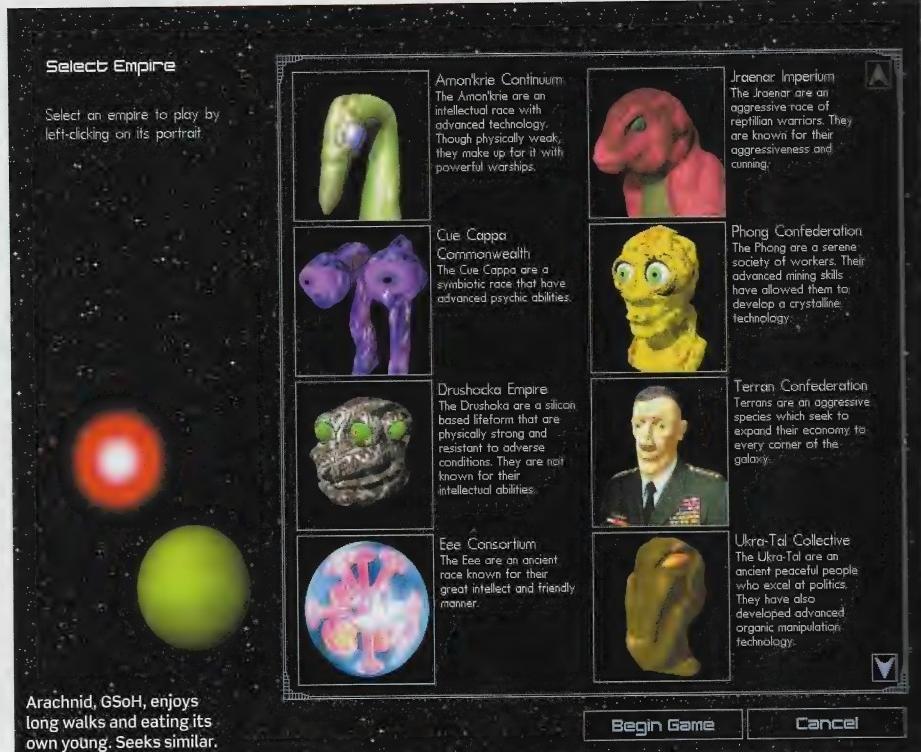


NovaWorld

Novalogic logo, NovaWorld, are registered trademarks of Novalogic Inc. Joint Operations, Typhoon Rising, Escalation and the NovaWorld Logo are trademarks of Novalogic Inc. The Way It's Meant to be Played logo and other NVIDIA Marks are trademarks of NVIDIA Corporation. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.



Did I mention the graphics?



SPACE EMPIRES IV GOLD

Doesn't glitter, but the name still fits

Two things really stand out about *Space Empires IV Gold*. The first is that Malfador Machinations is quite possibly the best developer name in the history of all things, even if it does sound like something out of Harry Potter. The second thing is simply the word 'Hardcore', written in letters five hundred feet tall. In an alien language. On the moon.

One of the longest running 4X (eXploration, eXpansion, eXploitation and eXtermination, and if you needed to ask, you might want to consider turning the page right now) games around, *Space Empires* challenges you to create your own hyperspace society from the absolute ground up. It's not pretty – even considering that it was originally released back in 2002 as the update to an already two year old game – but you can't knock the level of detail. Simply starting a new game offers more choice than most 4X rivals can dream of. Everything is covered from your race's preferred planetary atmosphere to their aptitude for mining. Every new screen unfolds

further options, decisions and opportunities, from research to the formation of your units in the space combat sequences.

Design new ships, set your empire's research priorities, explore and meet up with the other races in the universe – there's little specifically new on offer, nothing that takes the 4X genre and pushes it up to the heavens it aspires to, but *Space Empires* does cover almost every single base.

While *Master of Orion* 3 ultimately imploded under the weight of its own ambition and *Galactic Civilizations* (while still an excellent example of the genre) can often be something of a lightweight contender, *Space Empires* really does give the impression of a whole, detailed civilisation at your fingertips – just as long as you don't mind squinting to actually see it. This is especially notable in the inevitable combat sequences, which try to be an in-depth feast of strategy goodness, but in practice prove more fiddly than

final frontier. While this was never going to be a particularly exciting game – deep, yes, satisfying, certainly, but never exciting – this is definitely the biggest improvement I would hope to see in the forthcoming *Space Empires V*. What's the point of ruling the universe if you

spend all your time glaring at a spreadsheet?

Wondering about that mysterious 'Gold' tag? Well it largely refers to the extras on offer – 200Mb worth

of mods that can be dropped straight into the game folder. Much like the game itself, think 'comprehensive, but unexciting'. You get new scenarios, such as returning home after the moon gets blasted off into deep space (you know, you could make a TV

series out of an idea like that), new random events, different racial types (such as pirates who have to keep conquering ships and taking slaves to stay alive), AI profiles for enemy empires and even a full web-client that hooks into your saves and manages online games.

Just looking at the screenshots will tell you if you're the kind of player that can get started in a game like this. Assuming you can fill in the gaps between the stats, building an empire in your head as well as on the screen, and the sheer amount of detail in everything from building your first ships to crushing rival empires in multiplayer makes *Space Empires* one of the few games from the turn of the millennium that you won't be surprised to still find around.

RICHARD COBBETT

**As long as
you don't
mind
squinting**

PCGAMER Epic space action by the numbers

IT'S ➤ Big ➤ Bigger
➤ Quite clearly from 2002

IT'S NOT ➤ Pretty ➤ Accessible
➤ For the attention deficient

Endless+2

80%



SHADOW OPS

Sympathising with the enemy

Here's a good one: a bald-headed villain, right, who also has a goatee, has stolen a clear weapon – oh, you've had it? What about the one at the special forces expert on rail who – no? OK, then. Well about the first-person shooter that... all right, I'm going now. Suffice to say that *Shadow Ops* puts you into the combat boots of a modern-special forces expert with an important mission. There is a little to offer here as usual: the AI, for example, which makes enemies make use of tactics to keep themselves hidden. Advance on their position and they'll drop back; if for too long and they'll move forward. This simple yet overdue variation turns a distinctly bad game into – well, a slightly better one.

Rather than simply running around whatever location the game offers (ranging from genre

staples like 'desert' and 'jungle' to the Eiffel tower), it's necessary to carefully sneak from cover to cover, peeking around corners and listening for enemy reloads. There are friendly soldiers to help out, although they're just drones who follow your lead.

While the levels are generic, there's a professional attention to detail that makes them very convincing. Weapons are noisy –

their staccato bursts really give them a kick, while the soundtrack keeps the blood pumping and the brain on high alert.

With so much to recommend it, how could *Shadow Ops* be less than spectacular? Alas, it's an all too common failing – repetition. Once the need to hide behind the artfully positioned crates, pillars, sandbags, boulders, huts and team-mates is mastered, the excitement wanes and boredom rapidly takes its place. No matter how stunning the levels, no matter how professional a game is, constant repetition makes it about as much fun as strimming the lawn or stripping paint. And I play video games to get away from that sort of thing.

WILL JENKINS

PCGAMER

Like running a marathon. On a treadmill. With a gun.

64%



Lan PIRATES extreme gaming

WORK HARD, PLAY HARD

lanpirates.com

INTRODUCING THE NEW BUCCANEER 925

"Impressively quiet for a performance machine."

"Impressively built with a general air of solidity."

82%

PC Extreme Review - Issue 20

The Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology enables the LAN PIRATES Buccaneer to excel at doing two things at once. Protect your PC with virus scanning while you watch a movie or play games - and enjoy a responsive PC.

Buccaneer 925

Chieftec Matrix Case
Tagan 480w Quiet PSU
Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 550 (3.4GHz/90nm/800FSB/1MB Cache/LGA775)
Intel® D925XCVLK Motherboard
Crucial Ballistic DDR 2 533MHz - 512MB x 2
ATI Radeon X800XT 256MB PCI-Express 16x
Seagate Barracuda SATA (7200rpm/8MB Cache) 200GB x 2 on RAID 0
Sony DW-D18A Black 8x Dual Layer DVD Writer
Sony CRX320E-B2 Black DVD/CDRW Drive (52x32x52x16)
Creative Audigy™ 2 ZS Platinum Pro - Optional
Microsoft® Windows® XP Professional
Logitech® Internet Keyboard
Logitech® MX™ 510 Performance Optical Mouse
£1,999 VAT Inc

intel inside

pentium 4

NBA LIVE 2005

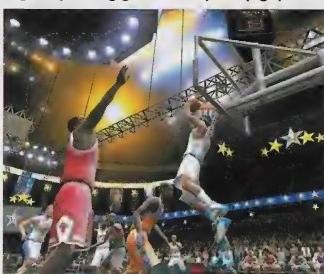
Because NBA Dead 2005 doesn't rhyme



Well-timed key presses prompt heroics.



A good passing game will open up gaps.



Feeling ambivalent today. No, not *that* – I still prefer girls. I mean about EA Sports games, and their annual updates. See, EA tread a very fine line with them, improving *just enough* each time to get away with pimping a new version at people. You can almost imagine a besuited executive deciding which features to hold back for the following year's version – after all, you don't want to give away more than you need, right? In fact, I'm officially coining a new word to apply to these games: 'requel'. I insist you all use it.

Trouble is, the juicy bone which said suits won't let go of is a particularly tasty one. *NBA Live* is arguably EA Sports' best game, combining fluidity, speed and a cracking multiplayer angle with a good single-player game too. The core principle is no different to *NHL* or *FIFA*: switch players, pass, fake, long pass... but *NBA* is impressively responsive, coping

Top-notch camerawork means real-time replays combine with a great view of the game.



well with a sport which relies on instant reactions and complex movement patterns. Most of the time, it does a good job of resembling a real-life match.

Crucially, for a game of this type, the movement of players off the ball is convincing, as they'll react logically to what's going on around them, picking up loose players and trying to move into space. And as with recent *NBA Live* iterations, only your first couple of games as a novice will be awkward; a basis of simple controls, with a few more to learn as you progress, means a classically curvy learning curve.

It's typically completist, too, with last year's Dynasty mode returning to let you see a team through a full season, various sub-games and all the statistics you can eat. All the major US teams are represented, plus some

'All-Star' teams from the rest of the world – after all, it's not like they won Olympic gold, is it?

If the quality of the visuals themselves is nothing to write to John Carmack about – a few suspect animations here and there – the positioning and motion of the various cameras is hugely impressive. A game's camera is usually only worth mentioning if it's bad, but the angles and clarity here deliver an almost perfect view of the basketball proceedings as they unfold. Ah, if only the music was as sophisticated.

I'm coining a new word to apply to these games

So what's my 'beef', 'man'? Well, the trouble with *NBA Live 2005* *NBA Live 2004*. That year-old game is available on budget and is, give or take, just as good as its sequel, even if it lacks the new game's handful of supposedly revolutionary, but in fact largely disposable, new features. Only diehard fans, not many of whom imagine live outside the 50 states, will appreciate the slightly different game types on offer, especially as multiplayer is still the game's strongest suit.

It's as good a sports sim as *FIFA*, but unless you 'dig' its 'stylings', you may find yourself 'bugging out'. 'Word.'

ROSS ATHERTON

PCGAMER It's... hngghhh... really good

IT'S ➤Pumping ➤Jumping
➤Slam-dunking

IT'S NOT ➤Half-court ➤Gamepad-only
➤A whole new game

Jammy

85%

■ Price £30 ■ Release Out now ■ Publisher Electronic Arts ■ Developer In-house ■ They say 1GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card ■ We say 1.5GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 128Mb 3D card
■ Multiplayer Network, internet (via EA Sports), two players ■ Link www.easports.com ■ Influenced by Every other EA Sports game ever ■ Alternatively *NBA Live 2004* (out on budget), 88%

SUDDEN STRIKE 3

Arms for Victory

A World War II Real-time Strategy Game



Battles for the Pacific Islands



www.fireglowgames.com

© Copyright 2004 Fireglow Ltd. All rights reserved.

NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND 2

The semi-legal just became twice as much fun

PC GAMER
MUST BUY
★★★★★



Bayview's Vegas-like city centre holds no fear for BobbySpeed.

GO GO GO!

The fast and the occasionally grumpy

NFSU2 throws a few new race types into the brew to keep ardent fans on their toes



STREET X is the dramatic name given to short-course circuit races on dedicated tracks between four cars.



OUTRUN is more an individual challenge you can make with other racers, who roam the city map looking for trouble.



DOWNHILL DRIFT is the hardest race that demands controlled skids, downhill, with oncoming traffic. Big in Japan, apparently.



UNDERGROUND RACING LEAGUE These races on dedicated high-speed tracks feel more like TOCA – not the best addition.



(Below) It's easy to get lost. Road signs are helpful.



When you're quite ready, dear, we've a race to be getting on with.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are living in the future. In this strange place, games are released on time. Their worlds are freeform, yet so cunningly created as to ease you gently into a wondrous experience of exploration and discovery. Presentation is slicker than Tony Blair's hair-gel. Lights bloom, neon glows and digital music beeps and whirrs. From billboards, real-world advertising glares, and even a game's interface can be bought.

One of NFSU2's atmospheric additions is a mobile phone (hands-free, I hope) in your car which receives text messages and calls directing you to new races, unlocked items and other locations around the game's freeform city of Bayview. But it's no generic device, instead being heavily branded with Cingular, a large US network operator (which doesn't seem to have made into the UK yet) and its logo is almost always on your screen. Advertising in games is not a new phenomenon, but this, coupled with the ubiquitous billboard and shop-front branding, is a new high (or low) for the practice. It's nice to know that, in these uncertain financial times for the games business, there are other sources of income, but I'm not sure this is the future we all envisaged ten years ago.

It's just conceivable to consider all this as an advancement in realism, if you squint, but NFSU2

RACE FACE

All in good taste

It's OK to be fast, but your car needs to look good



This unmodified Nissan 240SX is, frankly, rubbish. I feel like the ugliest duckling at a lovely party, plodding through the city.



Now we're talking. This Hummer is vastly improved with spoilers, a nice paint job and some bubbly vinyl on the flanks. Yummy.



Spray-paint doesn't have taste warnings. You'll wade through a few design disasters before settling on a favoured appearance.



The extent to which you can mod your car is astonishing. Nitrous purge, hydraulics and neon are among the new additions.

raises the realism bar in a multitude of other more pleasing ways. The original's roster of races all took place in one city, with courses blocked off and set up for each race, but you were never able to freely roam that city. Now you can, in the all-new metropolis of Bayview, pottering around town rather than a menu screen between races. The mini-map indicates locations

which trigger individual races, and there's always a good choice. The result is that the setting feels more important: you pay attention to the racing-scene

folk who pop up occasionally, and become more involved in the notion of actually 'being' a street racer. Clever EA.

Being a street racer means accepting sponsorship contracts from tuner-component

ON THE DISC Take our exclusive demo for an illegal spin through Bayview city > Demos

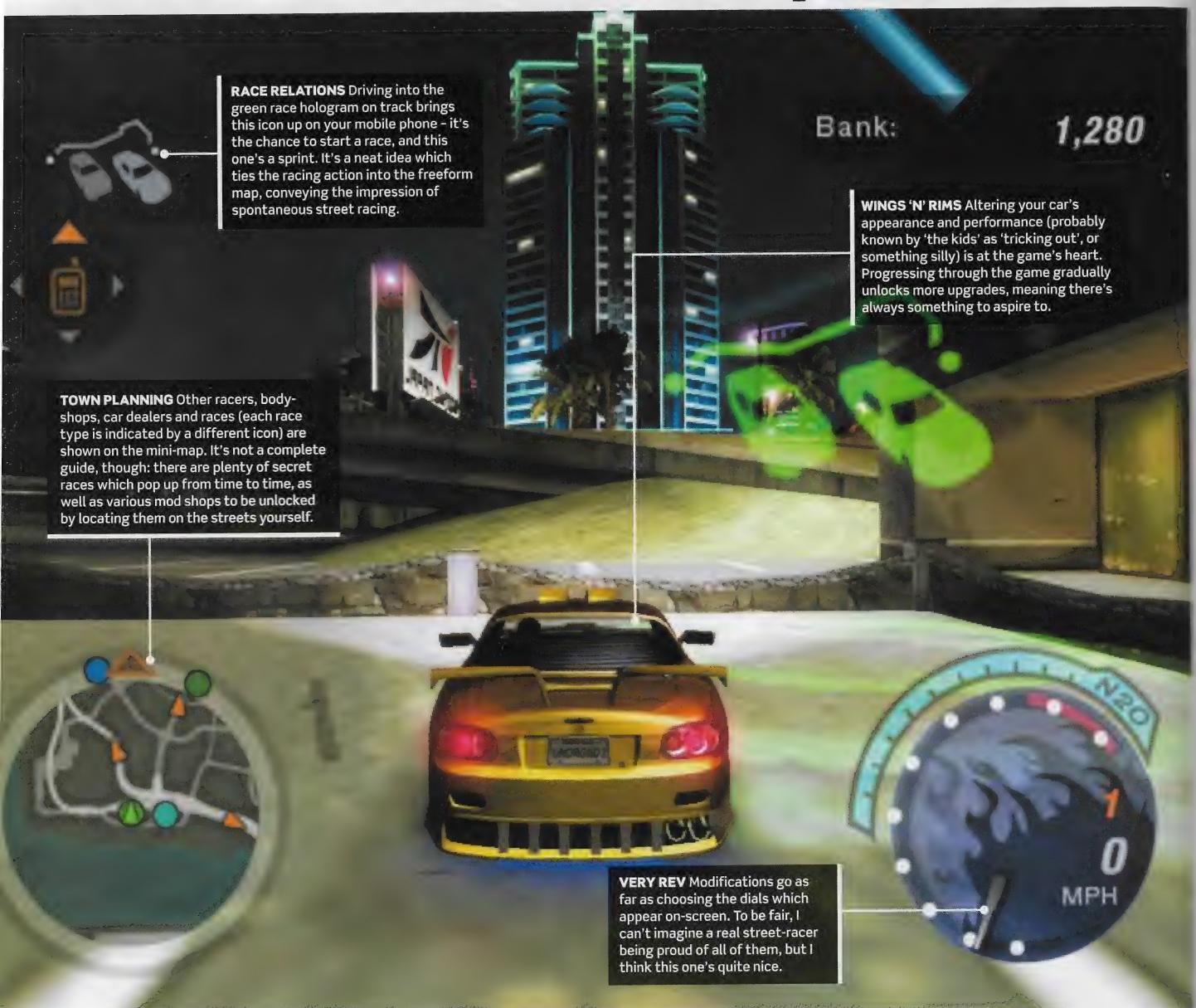
companies for whom you'll need to win races. It's all good, because you'll need to win anyway to keep unlocking new cars, performance upgrades, visual accoutrements and tracks. Your sponsor might demand that you win a certain number of, say, Circuit races, but you're essentially free to race however you want. The city's other roaming racers are another factor – shown on your mini-map as friendly orange icons. In fact, they're anything but friendly: these sociopathic car-crimbs are just itching for a race. Sidle up alongside them in the street as they hare along and you'll get the chance to challenge them to a Fast-and-the-Furious-style race. Pull ahead by a certain distance and you'll win the princely sum of \$100; fall behind by a distance and you lose the same sum. Peanuts, you'd think, and you'd be right; there's very little in-game consequence to these races – just the smug knowledge that you've beaten some fool with a pink spoiler. Now that's emergent.

NFSU2 is more of a role-playing game than ever. Win races to unlock access to paint jobs and kit for your car in the time-honoured fashion, but the sheer number and diversity of items on offer is boggling. Apparently, spinners aren't the little old ladies I employ in my cotton mills on a paltry wage, but metallic ►

Lights bloom, neon glows and music beeps

TAKEN APART

"More neon than Times Square"



devices attached to wheels which literally spin around, supposedly looking 'cool'. Downright dangerous, if you ask me. How about something much more sensible, like neon lighting for your boot (or 'trunk', if you insist)? The range of choices seems pointless to me, but doubtless somewhere there'll be someone who'll truly agonise over the size and brand of hi-fi amp they install at great expense.

All of this fussing and preening improves your car's visual rating, which again unlocks more options, but of course the real point is to create a totally unique car. That's particularly important when going online, and something quite easy to do with the theoretical billions of permutations on offer.

Fundamentally, it's a case of personalising your in-game persona with items that prove how far you've progressed in the game: a highly satisfying system of challenge and reward.

However, NFSU2 muddies the water somewhat by offering a variety of rewards. Winning a standard race nets the stipulated cash reward, but there's also a reputation bonus to be fought for. Beat the other drivers by a significant margin and reputation points are gained; more for particularly crushing wins. It's not made abundantly clear what these various points are for, but it never feels like you're being made to jump through hoops; in fact,

the game benefits from a slightly fuzzy objective. Win races! Have fun! It's a philosophy that's conducive to enjoying the experience, rather than worrying about specific goals all the time.

Naturally, the way the cars handle is absolutely key to the driving experience. Happily, each is different and none are without their fun moments, even the lumbering SUV-type vehicles

Downright dangerous, if you ask me

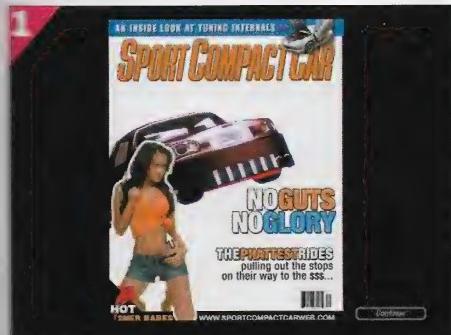
which you'll unlock early in the game. At the outset, the shop-standard motors are weak and struggle to attain 100mph. Whack in an engine upgrade to your Focus or MX-5 (the only sensible choice) and suddenly more power is at your fingertips; most

upgrades have an appreciable effect. But what's this? More power with no handling or tyre upgrades turns your runabout into a snorting, slippery beast, prone to unprompted donutting

While the handling and behaviour of all the cars could only be described as 'arcade', don't equate that with 'easy'. Notwithstanding the difficulty settings, you will encounter some bastard-hard races, particularly towards the end of the career game, where mistakes as minor as taking the wrong racing line on one corner will be punished by the AI drivers. To this end, an analogue controller – for acceleration as well as steering if possible – is a must to fully enjoy this game, let alone to beat it. It's clearly been designed around the

Moment of victory

One of NFSU2's master-strokes is to keep the rewards coming thick and fast



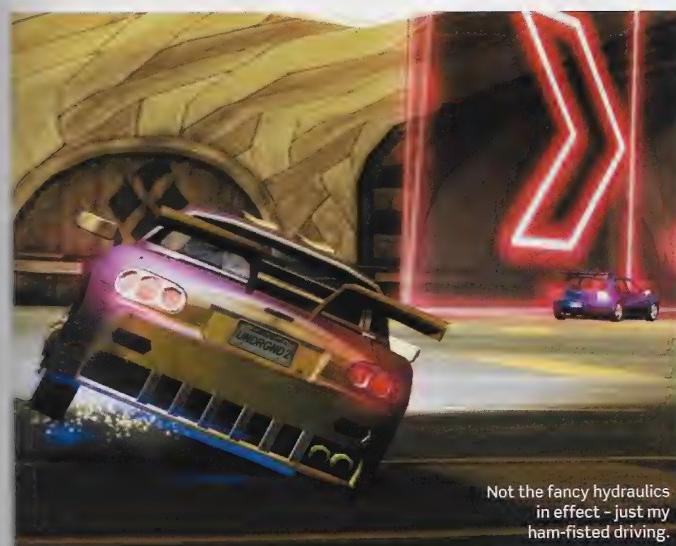
Occasionally you'll get a call to go to a location, where a photographer or DVD maker is conducting a shoot. Get there on time, and you can even direct the shoot.



The comic-book plot isn't central but, as with the original, gives a sense of progression and of there being other people on the 'scene'. Including Kelly Brook. Rrroww.



Complete a few races and new areas of the city open up, along with new locations and races. The map keeps tabs on everything, and includes a handy GPS directional utility.



Not the fancy hydraulics in effect - just my ham-fisted driving.

box's versatile controller... if you could buy a device to make such a thing work on your PC, eh?

NFSU2 expands on the original's race types with a few new additions. Circuit and Sprint races are very much as they were, Drift - where points are red for maintaining high-speed power-slides - except you'll race several other racers on the track with you instead of racing separately. Drag races - straight-accelero-fests which test the timing of your gear-changes and/or luck - are now longer and even faster, but the addition of several new race types are no less successful - see 'The fast and occasionally grumpy'.

Time for a slight whinge. We're enough trouble in real life trying to drive all around town for various necessities: caviar in Knightsbridge, tailor in Saville Row, and so on. So why does NFSU2 insist on only allowing

repainting at one location? Admittedly, being able to jump to your home garage at any time to swap cars or parts is handy, but why can't your mechanic whip out the airbrush at the same time?

Perhaps he can't move for all the cars in there - for one of NFSU2's best features is that you can own several cars at once. No longer are you restricted to having just the 'best' car - taking on lucrative contracts opens up new slots to own another vehicle, up to a maximum of five. Each must be separately upgraded, so you'll never be short of ways to spend your money, as you were in the original. With some 30-odd cars to choose from overall, and various types including giant SUVs (which have their own special races) you'll eventually have a car for every occasion.

This dovetails nicely with another new feature: being able to tune your car on a test track and rolling track; setting it up for



optimum performance on different types of race. Now, this may be a bit much tweaking for some, but when you've really got hold of the game you can have different cars ready in your garage for different purposes: a flat-out racer for Sprints and Drags, one with monster acceleration and grip for Street-X, and so on.

My only major criticism of the original was that it limited multiplayer to EA's own restrictive online system. I'd love to think that they've been listening carefully to everything I say (not that I'm paranoid about being bugged, but, hey, this is EA we're talking about) but it's happened. I'm happy to say that

NFSU2 now boasts a full slate of LAN functions in addition to EA Online play. Being able to show off how much you've unlocked, and quite how little taste you have when it comes to colour schemes, is a delicious joy, regardless of who wins, though it can lead to mismatches if one racer simply has more under the bonnet.

It's slightly ironic that NFSU2 is really aimed at the consoles, where the weight of competition from the likes of *Burnout 3* means it may not gain pre-eminence. On the PC, though, it's hard to find any competition at all for an arcade racer that hardly puts a tyre wrong.

ROSS ATHERTON

PC GAMER Pumped-up racing with twin fun-turbos

IT'S ➤ Slick Street-talking
➤ Jammed with advertising

IT'S NOT ➤ A simulation
➤ Over-structured
➤ Missing LAN play this time

Unspoiled

90%

TOP SPIN

Come on, Tim!



A rare mistake from Dave Tennis. It was a heroic effort.



Dave Tennis's curly mullet proved a little distract...
But the ball boys fancied him.

This should be one of the finest sports games, and the best tennis game, in one. It has superb animation, coupled with a simple-to-learn control system that allows skilled players to make tactical decisions about where to place the ball, when to place it, and with how much power. It looks gorgeous, as close as conceivable to a live television game. And it's full of incidental detail, such as the way the ball clips the white line on a clay court and throws up a little dust cloud, or the way players appear to hang in the air, legs bent, as they commit to a smash. It's a virtual sportscast.

Play revolves around the idea of being 'In the Zone'. Along with the standard top-spin, slice, safe and lob buttons assigned to the four face buttons on your joypad, you're given access to two special moves – a drop shot and a powerful smash. To get these in, you need to line up a dial as it oscillates up and down, by holding down on the triggers: get it right and you'll smack the ball into the far corners; miss, and you'll be caught out by the net.

Nailing this simple skill is hugely important: with it, you can quietly demolish any opponent; without it, you'll be drawn into massively extended rallies, unable to deliver that final blow. When you begin a match, it's difficult to make these decisive passing shots, but as you gain momentum, the computer eases off, allowing you to pull it off most of the time.

While it's possible to do so on the keyboard, I recommend investing in a couple of joypads.

For single players, the real thrill is the extended career: take your

own custom character on a world-wide jaunt, rising up the rankings, earning cash for new socks, shades, shirts and shorts, while learning new skills and upping your abilities through simple training regimes. Strange though it might sound, *Top Spin* is actually a tennis RPG – your

Top Spin is actually a tennis RPG

rise through the worldwide rankings coincides with the development of your character. You're allowed to 'master' certain abilities like strong backhands, graceful lobs and smashes, but not all of them, thus creating your own unique style. And unique is the watchword – thanks to the character creation system, my own character, Dave Tennis, is blessed with extraordinary height and length. He's able to pull balls

heading baseline-wards back into play right by the net, his clumsy, lolloping gait and hideous visage proving more than a match for the assembled professionals.

Top Spin is excellent, have no doubt about that. It's as close to the real thing as we can imagine. Yet it still leaves me feeling a tad empty. There's no atmosphere to even the biggest matches, no passion, no grunting. Even extended multiplayer bouts feel cold and clinical, too precise. Rallies can go on for too long, just batting the ball back and forth, like Pong, not Ping-Pong. This is the problem: we're used to a certain pomp and pizzazz in sports games. *Top Spin* doesn't bother with any of that, it just goes on with providing a beautiful sports game. That's just about enough to satisfy.

TIM EDWARD

PCGAMER Professional, but lacking passion

IT'S

- An RPG
- Lacking pomp
- A tennis simulation

IT'S NOT

- A smash hit
- Arcade action
- Hugely atmospheric

Serviceable

75%

■ Price £30 ■ Release Out now ■ Publisher Atari ■ Developer PAM ■ They say 1GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card ■ We say 2GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 128Mb 3D card, joypad
■ Multiplayer 4 Players, Split-screen, LAN, Internet ■ Link www.atari.com ■ Community www.operationsports.com ■ Influenced by Pong, Sue Barker ■ Alternatively Virtua Tennis, 81%

LIVING FOR THE CITY



WWW.CITYOFHEROES.COM

CITY OF HEROES™ DELUXE

FIND THE HERO
INSIDE YOURSELF
...
FROM FEBRUARY '05

12+
www.pegi.info

ncsoft

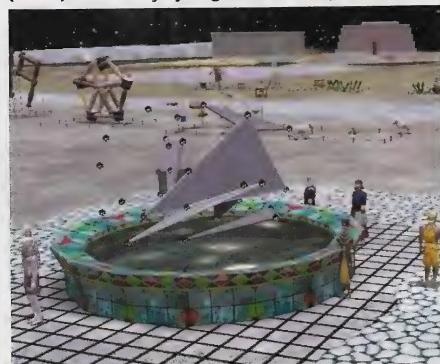
CRYPTIC STUDIOS

A TALE IN THE DESERT II

Work like an Egyptian



(Below) "...And I say Pythagoras is a bloody show-off."



Frankly, we need answers. We need to know why companies all over the world are wasting untold sums making identikit orc-bashing MMORPG games whose sole distinguishing feature is the size of the female characters' breasts, while *A Tale in the Desert* languishes all but unknown. It's true that *Tale* isn't going to appeal to everyone, but neither does caviar – and that gloopy fish goo costs more per ounce than my house.

A Tale in the Desert is the one MMORPG that genuinely bothers to try something new. Its rivals claim that you get to play some great part in their stories, or that slaying the nearby dragon is actually a notable achievement, but in reality they're just chatrooms with elves. You can't really do anything except hit things, level up, and hit slightly bigger things. A robot could play them. By contrast *Tale*, and now *Tale II*, is all about using your skills to advance through the

ranks – your skills, not some arbitrary number. Choose the path of Conflict and you advance by challenging other players to games of skill. Opt for Art and you have to manually construct sculptures using in-game objects, passing the test only when plenty of other players have taken the time to deem your work interesting.

Leadership is the most exciting skill of the lot. *Tale* is the only game where you can have a direct impact on the laws of the land, proposing almost anything, from blonde players having to give a block of wood to every brown-haired player they see on a Tuesday, to banning a player from the game. Actually turning these into a cast-iron law, enforced by the game code itself, involves persuading enough of the populace to vote it in, adding a whole political aspect to the game. It's even possible to be

elected as Demi-Pharaoh, with the ability to boot people out of the game on a whim.

The catch is that getting to do any of this exciting, innovative, why-the-hell-isn't-everybody-ripping-this-off-instead-of-bloody-*EverQuest* stuff requires a lot of slogging through tedious crafting and resource collecting.

Simply becoming a Citizen of Egypt (translation: finishing the tutorial) involves painstakingly gathering an endless series of objects just to build bricks and basic blades. Without a Mentor on hand to show you the ropes (and the ropes' ingredients and

the machine that makes the ropes and then the fifteen hundred things you can do with the ropes once you've got them), it's easy to get bogged down. While you'll find other things to do fairly soon, that part of the game never goes away – the overall goal for the player base as a group being to construct seven great monuments and establish Egypt as an immortal kingdom.

Love it or hate it, this is a game that simply gets it. Much like those pyramid builders, you'll have to get in there for the long haul if you hope to see anything substantial for your time, but the results of your hard work will live on for a long time to come.

RICHARD COBBETT

They're just chatrooms with elves

PCGAMER The only decent pyramid scheme

IT'S ➤ Original ➤ An acquired taste
➤ A monument to Civilization

IT'S NOT ➤ Very pretty ➤ ADD friendly
➤ EverQuest on the Nile

Monolithic

83%

■ Price \$13.95/month (download only) ■ Release Out now ■ Publisher eGenesis ■ Developer In-house ■ They say 500MHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 16Mb 3D card ■ We say 1GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card
■ Multiplayer Massively ■ Link www.ataleinthesdesert.com ■ Community <http://wiki.atid.net> ■ Influenced by Pharaoh, A Tale in the Desert ■ Alternatively Ultima Online, 90%

Massively Multiplayer Online Game

JOIN A SUPER GROUP



THERE IS A PLACE WE CAN
ALL BE HEROES. CITY OF HEROES
BRINGS THE WORLD
OF COMIC BOOKS ALIVE IN THE
FIRST MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER
ONLINE GAME OF
ITS KIND



AVAILABLE FROM
FEBRUARY '05



WWW.CITYOFHEROES.COM



NCSOFT



CRYPTIC
STUDIO

AXIS & ALLIES

Nothing we'd go to war over



WWII. Tanks in a city. Stop us if you've heard this one before.



The boardgaming community are a unique bunch – a glance into Mark Donald's spare bedroom would tell you as much. But it is through boardgames that some of the clearest and most cunning tactical ploys are envisaged and executed. History is thick with generals who played games to sharpen their stratagems. But the intricacies of

such cardboard cunning don't always translate smoothly to the digital battlefield – and perhaps all too aware of this, Timegate Studios opted to use the boardgame of the same name as

'inspiration' for *Axis & Allies*. For which you might read 'make a standard RTS and stick a sellable name on it'.

As the name suggests, the boardgame *Axis & Allies* involves manoeuvring armies around a world map during WWII in a manner not entirely dissimilar to *Risk*. This turn-based world-level strategy element is retained in the digital incarnation, but only in a peripheral form reminiscent of *Rise of Nations'* campaign game: move an army or armies into an occupied territory and a battle will commence. On the other hand, the game's two proper campaigns – one Axis, one

Allies, in which you variously control German, Russian, American, Japanese and British forces – are formed by a series of unlinked historical battles. All rather dissatisfaction if you were

hoping to follow the action all the way through in a particular theatre of WWII. Or if you wanted to feel you were making any sort of impact.

Such complaints might be excusable if the sharp end of the game – the real-time strategy itself – were a match for the likes of recent favourites *Soldiers*, *Panzers*, *Rise of Nations* or *Rome: Total War*. But, to be brief, it's not. To be rather less brief, it lacks

modern sophistication in too many areas to forgive, despite a number of at-first-glance-quite-cunning features. For example, soldiers and vehicles are recruited as units of three to eight that move and fight together. It makes sense to group several together to form a nice mixed battlegroup but no sense at all that there are no formation commands or even an auto-formation to organise them into an effective fighting or defensive pattern.

Instead, they'll arrive at their destination in the same higgledy-piggledy shape they left in, and individually moving each unit into place is an absurd time-drain. More effective is the resupply perimeter; an area around your base within which

Thumbnail Review

It's the RTS of the strategy boardgame

- Monty
- Patton
- Nazis
- Dice

Fails to take on the RTS heavyweights. A few nice touches and historical detail can't save the day.

A glance in Mark Donald's bedroom

CAUGHT MARTIAL

Sicily to Stalingrad in, ooh, about ten minutes

Axis & Allies plays hopscotch with history, bouncing from one scenario to another apropos of nothing



Breaking out from the beach-heads of Normandy was one of the biggest military operations the world has seen. *Axis & Allies* gets the scale very wrong.



North African encounters make good use of secondary objectives and real-life generals' special abilities, which are often special attacks as seen in *C&C Generals*.



Each campaign map has specific objectives, not just obliterating the enemy. Here, Stalingrad must be liberated with the help of another AI-controlled force.

TAKEN APART

"Battlefield: Philippines..."



its will automatically stock up on ammo, heal themselves of damage and recruit reserves to fill gaps depleted through combat. It's not quite *RoN*'s subtle territory and attrition model, but does allow interesting attack-and-retreat tactics.

A wide range of unit types is always pleasing, but there's something about *Axis & Allies' Hidden Strike*-esque visuals that fails to get across the satisfaction of having researched and built even the heaviest tank. Instead, it's easy to see your units as armoured rocks, paper men and wheeled scissors; even then, it's rarely possible in the heat of battle and with a very close fog of war to set the 'right' unit onto

your enemy, with the temptation to lump your units together and pile in all too strong.

There are, as you'd expect, endless nods to the C&C RTS standard. One main base, or Corps HQ, creates specific trucks which unfold into unit-builders: barracks, armour, etc, as well as research options specific to the famous general related to the scenario. Then there are trucks to build structures for specific technologies: motor pool, artillery, etc, which also contain research options. Finally there are trucks to build resource-boosting structures: ammo and oil supply stations, plus general supply stations to boost your radius of resupply. Confused? You will be.

The interface is unhelpful and cluttered, failing to explain the game's systems in the way we usually take for granted in this genre. Wouldn't it have been easier to slot all the research options together in one menu?

The least we might hope for in a modern RTS is a fully featured skirmish and multiplayer option, and at last the battle begins to swing in A&A's favour. Team-play is very welcome, as is a selection

of scenario maps, a decent map randomiser and an editor.

But if it's not as good as the top titles, and it won't offer much to fans of the boardgame, who exactly is this aimed at? *Axis & Allies* encapsulates the reason why we bemoan the endless parade of WWII games: because too many of them are copyist, me-too-but-not-quite-as-good genre work. I can't recommend this.

ROSS ATHERTON

PCGAMER Just another WWII game, then

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| IT'S | > Derivative
> Historical
> Hardware-hungry |
| IT'S NOT | > Nazi but nice
> Brain-taxing
> Much to do with the boardgame |

Bored

58%



CLUB FOOTBALL

Club foot, more like

Another month, another footy game – but wait, this is a newcomer from foreign fields. *Club Football 2005* is an update of last year's console-only release. Although the version reviewed here is the Manchester United licence, seven other top UK and European teams are represented (including Arsenal, Ajax and Real Madrid) in their own individual versions.

Visually, Codemasters have hyped the realism of the game's player models, but while some (Ferdinand, Keane) look authentic, others (O'Shea and Neville) might only be identified with the help of dental records. Players look jagged even in higher resolutions, sporting washed-out textures and uneven animation, while crowd effects bring to mind *FIFA '95*.

On the pitch, the ball feels light while players respond sluggishly – almost as if they're running on sand. Poor controls often lead to spectacular defensive mix-ups

that even the likes of Wes Brown would blanch at. The final indignity is the unforgiving refs who deal out cards like confetti. Commentary is uneven and repetitive, while sound effects lack oomph, but some solace is to be found in the sampled crowd chants that add atmosphere.

However Codies' precision-trigger mechanism can lead to some free-flowing play at times. Similarly laudable is the in-game power meter, with a well-

weighted through ball often heralding devastating counter-attacks. An element of longevity is guaranteed by a career mode in which you guide a wannabe Fergie fledgling through several seasons. There are also club goodies to unlock and classic scenarios to re-enact but these are weak, leaving you unfulfilled.

Club Football 2005 is not a total aberration, but its biggest problem is that the established competition is simply light years ahead in almost every respect. Seasoned aficionados will no doubt reside in either the *Pro Evo* or *FIFA* camps by now, leaving this wannabe on the bench.

ROB TAYLOR

PCGAMER

Relegation fodder compared to the PC Premiership heavyweights.

52%



■ Price £30 ■ Release Out now ■ Publisher Codemasters ■ Developer In-house
■ Multiplayer 8, LAN ■ Link www.codemasters.co.uk ■ Alternatively Pro Evo Soccer 3, 91%

PITFALL THE LOST EXPEDITION

It probably fell in a pit, let's face it

Rarely does a platformer feel at home on the PC, but *The Lost Expedition* takes the phenomenon to amusing new levels when its manual tells you to press the AWS keys "lightly to walk, push all the way to run," especially considering keyboards are digital not analogue. It's less amusing when you need to hit a tiny target and the briefest key tap jerks your aim too far in either direction. In fact, these sections render the game almost impossible with a keyboard, so if you don't have a gamepad you can forget the whole thing. Which is a shame as *The Lost Expedition* is surprisingly worth playing.

Harry Pitfall – an Indiana Jones wannabe who gets the flirtatious aspect of the persona so badly wrong, he's the hero men don't want to be – finds himself in a jungle with more pits than a pomegranate. It's a colourful and interesting place; the bold cartoon art shines through an ageing engine. And once you get down to the business of adventuring – swinging from vines, punching monkeys, hopping on the backs of crocodiles and jumping the chasms – it's hard not to have fun.

Pitfall is forgiving: should a crocodile snap you up, a button-



mashing mini-game allows you to pry open its jaw and use your compressed spine as a spring to launch yourself from its grip.

Unfortunately there are a few bugs: you occasionally fall off the ledges you land on, and you'll frequently be eaten by piranhas

while swimming awkwardly at a slope that should let you up onto land. If you also factor in the amount of backtracking that has to be done to access new areas, the irritating moments probably outnumber the good. But they're not unbearable, and *Pitfall's* simple elements work well enough together in those good moments that you come away feeling more satisfied than frustrated.

TOM FRANCIS

Harry's the sort of hero men don't want to be

PCGAMER
Very flakey platformer but full of enjoyable silliness.

68%

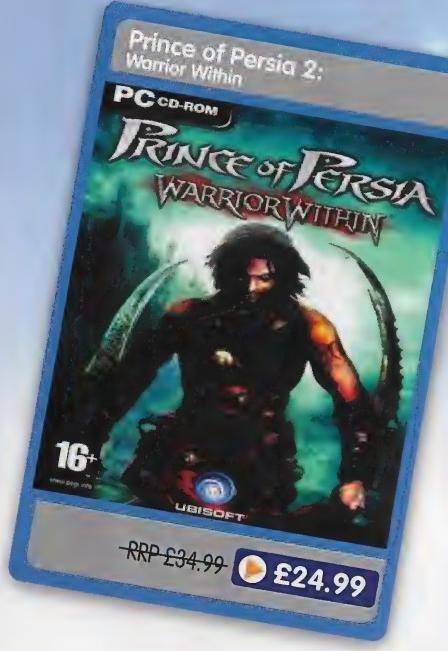
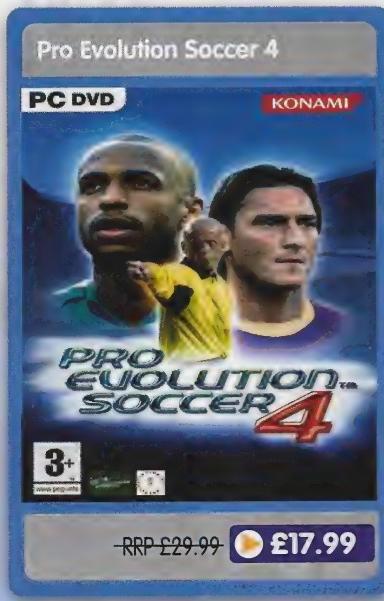
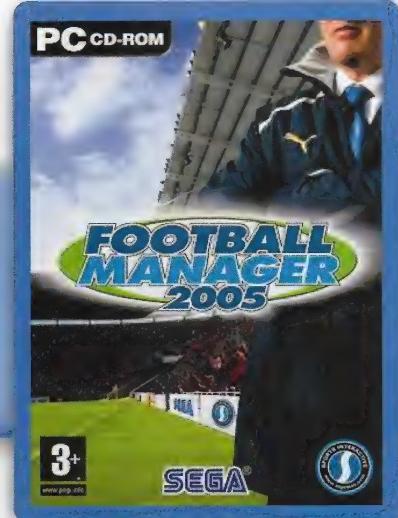


■ Price £30 ■ Release Out now ■ Publisher Aspyr ■ Developer Edge of Reality
■ Multiplayer No ■ Link www.pitfallharry.com ■ Alternatively Prince of Persia: SoT, 85%

Football Manager 2005

Interactive have crafted a superbly detailed masterpiece in Football Manager 2005. With more players and championships than any other football management sim, Football Manager has the latest squads and transfers right up to the end of the summer transfer window, so you'll be on the ball.

RRP £34.99  £17.99



PLAY.COM

MOVIES MUSIC GAMES

Prices are correct at time of going to press. Play.com reserve the right to change prices.

FREE DELIVERY
FREE DELIVER
FREE DELIVERY



(Below) No racial stereotypes here, then.



This is the only bit we can really do

TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2

Because failure is now the preferred option

See: a tricycle whirs out of control. A fat man in a thong tilts from its tiny saddle and smashes his balls on a midget. Guffaws. Did you laugh too? If you did, you'll love *Tony Hawk's* new direction, you hopeless simpleton. That's a compliment – being dumb in a teenage suburban American way, like, so totally rocks. It goes all the way to the White House. Unfortunately, *Underground 2* screws it up by actually being good at what it does.

The Jackass stylings are really just a veneer, to the relief of all – the dissenters having swallowed the cellophane on a dare and been unable to express their thought. Probably. So what you actually get is the most accomplished skating game around, polished like a stone by the endless waves of *Hawk's* sequels, and only a little bit of sub-Wayans brothers 'if-it's-loud-it-must-be-hilarious'

desperation. No, the skating is almost luxuriously good.

Like a Russian Doll, just when you think you've reduced it as far as it will go, each level reveals a new layer. Some areas are opened by special events you set off, some just by taking cunning lines, some by walking and climbing. The scale is family-sized, and where it's all limited to a relatively small floorplan – the more enticing options go upwards – it stays very focused. Day-to-night effects, impressive architecture and a cartoonish sense of place help nail the cities in your mind too, but don't expect subtleties. Germany features the Berlin Wall (which we secretly loved... shhh) and drunks in lederhosen, for instance; Spain has bullfighters and English people in football shirts. And so on.

Yet the most extreme thing here is extreme familiarity. In fact, it's so much like the older games that 'classic' mode ('Two Games In One?' Yes... or one twice) requires barely any rejigging – it even features some of the old levels. It's almost an admission the new Jackassery will stick in some people's throats. Adult people, say. Certainly the characters seem to be getting younger – not Wee-Man, Bam Margera et al, actual children – in order, presumably, to appeal to that 'demographic' more. Unless this is like with

policemen getting younger, in which case... I know all your dads. Be off with you. Still, you can always import your own elderly visage to the create-a-skater mode. Truly, it's like looking into the abyss.

If you've played all five *Hawk's* games, have faith in your fatigue and think carefully. But if you've missed a couple (and unless you own a console, you will have) it's worth coming back – the control system is Bollinger, the levels caviar, and if the goals are Idris ginger beer, well, so what? It's actually [cough] quite funny at times. Ironically, of course.

STEVE WILLIAMS

It's like looking into the abyss

PCGAMER Not as stupid as it looks

- IT'S** ➤ Polished ➤ Engrossing
➤ Well-designed
- IT'S NOT** ➤ ...Much ➤ Wearily ker-razy...
➤ Really very different

Ass-jacked

84%

■ Price £30 ■ Release Out now ■ Publisher Activision ■ Developer Neversoft ■ They say 800 MHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card ■ We say 1.5GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card
■ Multiplayer LAN, Internet, 2-player split screen ■ Link www.activision.com/microsite/thug2 ■ Influenced by *Tony Hawk's Underground*, *Jackass* ■ Alternatively *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3*, 87%

Pool:shark

GO HUSTLE



8.4
/10

...hugely authentic
and engaging pool sim..."

Xbox Magazine

OUT
NOW



XBOX
LIVE
ONLINE ENABLED



PlayStation.2



Buy online at www.zoodigitalpublishing.com

Published by ZOO Digital Publishing Ltd. © 2004 ZOO Digital Publishing Ltd. ZOO Digital Publishing and the ZOO Digital Publishing logo are trademarks of ZOO Digital Publishing Ltd., part of the ZOO Digital Group plc. Poolshark 2 © 2004 Blade Interactive Studios. GameSpy and the "Powered by GameSpy" design are trademarks of GameSpy Industries, Inc. The PlayStation family logo and "PlayStation" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Microsoft, Xbox and the Xbox logo are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or in other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. All rights reserved.

ZOO
Digital Publishing
www.zoodigitalpublishing.com

THE MOMENT OF SILENCE

...as we bow our heads and pray for hope



The rollercoaster had a surprisingly short queue.



Don't stand so close. You'll get future-cube eyes.



ARGH! No apostrophe! Take a few more per cent off the score.

Exuse me a moment, I'm just finishing my glass of e-Space Juice before I start this mega-reviewtron on my Pentium 8000, 50THz PC light-stick. What's that you ask? Am I from The Future? You can bet your old-fashioned 4D hover-scooter I am!

If only the above were any exaggeration of the tone *The Moment of Silence* sets from the very beginning. Based in an ambiguously future-addled New York city, it's just dying for you to notice how things are a little bit different, and yet at the same time, somehow familiar.

What's that giant glass and plastic, picture-emitting panel on the wall? A 'telescreen'? I'm sorry, I feel lost and confu... Oh! You mean like a television! How intriguingly similar and yet distantly unreachable.

Eurgh. It doesn't stop at gadgets – every tortuous cliche makes a cameo appearance. "Are you taking Liquid 9 or

something?" "Those Sleep 3 tablets are great!" And least surprisingly but most depressingly, there's the obligatory, "Wow! A Pantheon IV 3GHz processor – my dad once had one of those!" Yes, it's the future, well done, we get it. Please, please stop trying.

No wait, don't actually stop trying. Oh. Well, it would appear they did. Because beyond achieving the ability to both point and click, there's little else that this miserably broken adventure has got right. And it didn't do that very impressively. I never knew how vital the adventure gaming 'you can go in this direction' cursor icon was. Its absence means that the poorly designed layout of locations must be agonisingly traipsed over on the off-chance that the road leading to the left, or corridor to the right, can be walked down. Invariably,

turns out you were meant to walk into the wall to the south – you know, the one you couldn't see.

German developers, House of Tales, have put no more effort into the lame, hard-boiled detective plot (man goes missing, recently bereaved neighbour decides to find him for no reason whatsoever, and uncovers a... shock, alien conspiracy), nor the translation, which leaves you bemused that the American voice talent(less) did not object to the grammatically meaningless mistranslations: "There's already a door to the living room." Or "I'm considering to just go over."

It's better than *Myst*, but so's typhoid

And the classic: "Yesterday the police was at my apartment."

The story is complete gibberish, lazily deploying parallels with the terrorist attacks of 2001 and increasing threats of government censorship, but with no clever intent nor intelligent deconstruction of the contemporary politics of fear.

The ditchwater protagonist has had his wife and son killed off for seemingly no other reason than to manipulate the player into caring even less about him. A low tactic.

A kind word to finish: Um, it's better than *Myst*. But then so's typhoid. From the future. Riding nanobikes.

JOHN WALKER

PCGAMER Broken, and also rubbish

IT'S ➤ Lazy ➤ Poorly translated
➤ FROM THE FUTURE!

IT'S NOT ➤ Articulate ➤ Play-tested
➤ The Longest Journey 2

Shhhhhh

48%

SONIC HEROES

The Puff Daddy of games: it's all about the bling

Upon loading, *Sonic Heroes* looks every bit the game you want it to be: concrete, grass, water and primary colours all collide with Escher-like results. It even sounds fun; full of raucous music, whooshes and blings it's like walking into an arcade. Yes, it's a vivacious, vicious 3D platformer with scenery that flies at your face as you run over the landscape collecting rings.

But after prolonged play it fizzles like a hedgehog in a bonfire. Uncontrollable characters and awful camera angles wreck the proceedings. You're funnelled through each level, forced to follow a basic path. Although each team member can take charge and use their custom skills to slightly alter the route, there's little to no choice in what you do and when you do it. While

We wouldn't want their help, either.



the 'different' characters are really 'all the same'. And there are often moments where you can back away from the keyboard and the

hyperactive characters will still be pinging from launchpad to launchpad. It's easily the most damning indictment that, just

ON THE DVD Take Sonic and chums for a ring collecting spin yourself > Demos

when you want to be in control, when the frenetic pace hits almost unbearable heights, all control is taken from you.

With no replay value, silly cartoon sensibilities and awkward execution, there's very little here to excite even the most hardcore retro gamer, with the 3D beauty only serving to highlight the game's limited, clumsy action. You end up wishing for Nintendo to bring their platform hero to the PC. Now that would be something special...

CRAIG PEARSON

PC GAMER

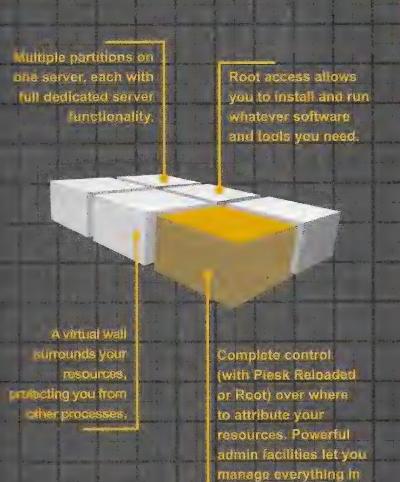
Don't strain yourself: leave it on the game shop shelf.

20%

■ Price £30 ■ Release Out now ■ Publisher Sega ■ Developer Sonic Team ■ They say 800 MHz CPU, 256 Mb RAM ■ We say 2GHz CPU, 512 Mb RAM
■ Multiplayer Two player ■ Link www.tougueam.com ■ Influenced by Tomb Raider ■ Alternatively Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time, 89%

THE ONE TEAM MEMBER THAT WON'T LET YOU DOWN

Character Profile...



Name

Hostway Virtual Private Server

Clan

Hostway

Function

Virtual Dedicated Web Hosting at the price of Shared

Unique Attribute

Full Server Partitioning allowing multiple game servers & domains

Additional Weaponry

Full Root Access, Plesk control panel, Up to 20Gb Disk space

Backup

24-hour roll-back capability

Support Function

24 x 7 response

Description

Let's face it - if you're serious about online gaming and want to host your own competitions, ladders, tournaments or even websites - what you really want is your own game server. But sometimes the cost of running a dedicated environment is just too high, no matter how much you fancy yourself as 'Gordon' or 'Major Pain'.

So wouldn't it be great if you could share the cost of a server but not share its resources? In other words, the full power of a dedicated game server that delivers the performance and ping times you need at a price you can all afford.

Whatever level, it will be the most consistently high performing member of your team...

From £49.95 / month
and no set-up fees.

Comes bundled with:
Web and mail server
Half-Life™ server
Counterstrike™ server
Wolfenstein™ server
and much more...

CONNECTIONS
AUSTRALIA 1
CANADA 1
GERMANY 1
IRELAND 1
NETHERLANDS 1
UNITED KINGDOM 1
UNITED STATES 1

THEY'RE BACK!

Beautiful games for beautiful people. And John Walker.



ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 2

Neither 'wacky' nor 'zany', thank you very much

■ Publisher Best of Atari ■ Price £10 ■ First review PCG 116, 84% ■ Requires 300MHz CPU, 64Mb RAM

Personally, I don't see what's so wrong about causing dozens of people to vomit. Surely that's what people really want when they go on a rollercoaster? Surely it's just a matter of bravado taken to the next stage? Surely this is the direction in which all thrill rides are heading? Surely? It's just a matter of hygiene.

And with the correct numbers of maintenance staff, I cannot see why this has to be such a big deal. I certainly don't see why everyone should make such an enormous fuss and start bad-mouthing my theme park. If they're not big enough to handle my rides, then they should be embarrassed, not shouting about it. And at the very

least, they could use the toilets to throw up in, and not go all over the path for everyone to slip on.

So what if I build all my ice cream, popcorn, fizzy drink and hotdog stands along the path of

the coaster queue? It's not as if I'm forcing the idiots to buy the stuff. They should think for themselves. "Oh dear, I do have a weak and feeble

constitution – I'd better not consume any of this delicious and yet reasonably priced food before I get on the bwig scwawy wide, in case I create the need for even more staff to be hired to clear up my tummy-splatters."

Talking of which, the staff should be grateful they get paid to work here at all. My park is so

It's not as if I'm forcing the idiots to buy the stuff

utterly fabulous to the eye that they should rightly be paying the entrance fee themselves, just to come to work each day. The visual treat of my sublimely designed theme areas,

accentuated by exquisitely appropriate décor, is all the reimbursement the little proles should require.

And no, I don't think it's a problem that there is no way to get out of the park once you've come in. I'm constantly researching new attractions, refining my coasters to up-chuck perfection, and chopping down trees to build more bins. There's not a single reason to ever leave.

PCGAMER

All the fun of the fair. And then some more fun, as fairs are rubbish.

84%

IN MEMORIAM

■ Publisher Focus
■ Price £10 ■ First review PCG 130, 81%
■ Requires 333MHz CPU, 64Mb RAM



One of the best things about this job is using the powers within one's fingertips to promote a small game to wider attention. Kieron and *Uplink* is a perfect example of where the critic recognises something special, and makes sure it's heard about. And it's a pleasure to do. This is my attempt at modestly drawing your attention to the fact that I did the same thing in my original review of *In Memoriam*.

At its simplest, it's a puzzle game. But it's the way it's a puzzle game that is of such note. Instead of asking you to solve clues within the game's universe, the game transposes its universe into ours. A puzzle, set by a mysterious serial killer holding two journalists hostage, may provide you with snippets of information – a photograph of a college at Oxford, the name of a girl who died there. So you go to the Oxford University website, and find that college. Then you search Google for the girl's name and you find her blog. And a forum discussing her death. And a memorial site about her. And you start to feel that blur.

All the while, other 'people' playing the game are emailing you – to your regular email account. You know they're not real, they can't be. But when Julie emails you at 1am to tell you she's off to bed now, as she was up too late with the puzzles the previous night, you begin to wonder. And the blur grows.

The puzzles do weaken later on, but the excellent video clips and reality distortion make this an obscurity deserving of your attention.

81%

Now remember, it's naughty to shoot them when they're like that.



RAVEN SHIELD

■ Publisher Mastertronic
■ Price £10 ■ First review PCG 120, 86%
■ Requires 800MHz CPU, 128Mb RAM

That Tom Clancy's a busy beaver. Writing about 18 books a week, having all those films released, and still finding the time to develop about 40 games a year. This isn't the only Clancy game out on budget this month, either. Focus are releasing *Splinter Cell* for £10, along with the mission pack for another £10. There's also *Ghost Recon* for £5, and in a Collector's Edition bundle for £25 you can get *Splinter Cell*, *Ghost Recon*, *Rogue Spear - Platinum* and *Rogue Spear - Black Thorn*. And via Mastertronic there's *Raven Shield*. See what I mean?

Raven Shield is the nine hundredth instalment in the *Rainbow Six* series, in which you must take on the evil forces of terror. Which is a bit like life. Well, almost, because *Raven Shield* contains an element not often employed by America's anti-terrorist actions: planning. While it may seem far more realistic to just rush your troops in without any thought and just have them shoot at anything with a darker tan than their own, these games insist on having you think out tactics through beforehand with intricate detail.

Raven Shield doesn't really differ from the rest of the series, which is something of a limitation. However, it still manages to execute itself (and its baddies) extremely competently. And as with the others, while the planning stages are the way the game is supposed to be played, if you want to chance it and take a

more first-person approach, the game remains malleable enough to support this sort of wanton madness.

83%

IL-2 STURMOVIK FORGOTTEN BATTLES

■ Publisher Focus
■ Price £10 ■ First review PCG 121, 90%
■ Requires 800MHz CPU, 256Mb RAM

Recently I was on a plane, flying to America to look at computer games for you. The extent of my dedication to the reader is astonishing. We were sitting around for ages before we took off, before being told there were an electrical problem and we had to return to be fixed. After an hour's wait, the pilot's voice issued again to inform us, "The engineers have looked at the engine, but when they got there the problem seemed to have just gone away by itself. They say it seems fine, so we're taking off." Oh thanks! Thanks a lot! He could at least lie. "The engineers have looked at the engine, and found that the frontal Trundleflaps were set to seventeen. They've put them back to Blue, and everything is perfect." When it comes to aeroplanes, you want exact science, not magical self-fixing electrical problems.



"Injuns! Quick, form the planes in a circle!"

PAST MASTERS

Games that changed the world

To get comedy right in games is incredibly tough. It must be, or so many people wouldn't get it so very wrong. With *No One Lives Forever*, Monolith got it very right.

NOLF squeezed you into the tight, extremely well-filled cat suit of Cate Archer, glamorous superspy. She stealthed her way into arch-villains' secret HQs, she machinegunned henchmen, she used a lot of cool gadgets. And it was nothing remotely



■ Publisher Vivendi
■ Developer Monolith
■ Review PCG 91, 91%
■ Released 2002



like a po-faced Tom Clancy game. That was because *NOLF* took its inspiration from the stylish, tongue-in-cheek spy adventures of the '60s - The men from U.N.C.L.E., The Avengers, Modesty Blaise.

It created humour on many levels, but it would have been meaningless if it hadn't also been a spot-on shooter with superb level design and great set-pieces. While it didn't take the FPS in any new directions, it understood its genre entirely, and hence knew how to inject humour into all the right places. And insinuating that a man is in love with a goat is always funny.

I'm getting better at linking these irrelevant intros into the subject of the review. 1C: Maddox Games know the science of the planes they're dealing with better than any other developer. A lifelong knowledge of the machines they're replicating shines through the seams of this realism-centric fighter sim. Cockpits are recreated in perfect detail, but not at the expense of including a game to play. This isn't *Microsoft Tedium Simulator* - this is big WWII flight fights, created by people with a passion for their subject.

Forgotten Battles builds upon the impressive base of *IL-2* to create what must be the ultimate warbird sim.

90%

ENTER THE MATRIX

■ Publisher Best of Atari
■ Price £10 ■ First review PCG 124, 65%
■ Requires 450MHz CPU, 64Mb RAM

One of the most abundant flaws within the paradigm, the general conception of the nature of scientific endeavour, of philosophy - the academic discipline making explicit the nature and significance of ordinary and scientific beliefs - during the process of investigating the intelligibility of concepts through the usage of rational arguments concerning their presuppositions, implications and inter-relationships, is a tendency toward employing the usage of, what some might call, and others dispute - as once cited by Grayford Fang in 'Cardinal Works



"Look out for that existential banana skin, agent Kierkegaard! Whoops!"

on a Concept of Dialectic Disturbance' pp. 45-3011 - as being in the nature of an obfuscatory dialogue.

The Wachowski brothers made quite a good film once. Which makes it a shame that for the first follow-up they merely threw philosophical spaghetti at the wall in the hope that some of it would stick. And here is the game of that ruined dinner.

Having reviewed *ETM* (for some other, lesser, poorer, weaker magazine than this) before the film came out, it might be thought that I'd have had the film spoiled for me. But no, spoiling the film for me was the special honour of the directors. However, spoiling the game for me was all the work of Shiny.

Quite how such a competent and imaginative developer could come up with a third-person action game so mystifyingly dull, so pointlessly simplistic, and so brain-wastingly tedious should be a matter of scientific study. It's lazy, boring, doesn't work, and you can complete the final level without even touching the controls. Don't.

49%

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

A rummage through the industry's 'To Do' list of games

HI-SCORE TABLE

<input type="checkbox"/> PRINCE OF PERSIA	p.76	91%
<input type="checkbox"/> NEED FOR SPEED 2	p.88	90%
<input type="checkbox"/> NBA LIVE 2005	p.86	85%
<input type="checkbox"/> TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2	p.100	84%
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A TALE IN THE DESERT 2	p.94	83%
<input type="checkbox"/> SPACE EMPIRES IV	p.84	80%
<input type="checkbox"/> MEN OF VALOUR	p.64	78%
<input type="checkbox"/> STAR WARS GALAXIES: JUMP TO LIGHTSPEED	p.73	77%
<input type="checkbox"/> TOP SPIN	p.92	75%
<input type="checkbox"/> XPAND RALLY	p.74	74%
<input type="checkbox"/> BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH	p.60	73%
<input type="checkbox"/> PITFALL	p.98	68%
<input type="checkbox"/> SHADOW OPS	p.85	64%
<input type="checkbox"/> ROLLING THUNDER	p.80	60%
<input type="checkbox"/> WORMS FORTS	p.70	60%
<input type="checkbox"/> AXIS & ALLIES	p.96	58%
<input type="checkbox"/> MORTYR 2	p.82	58%
<input type="checkbox"/> CLUB FOOTBALL	p.98	52%
<input type="checkbox"/> MOMENT OF SILENCE	p.102	48%
<input type="checkbox"/> LMA MANAGER 2005	p.68	47%
<input type="checkbox"/> SONIC HEROES	p.103	20%
<input type="checkbox"/> ATHENS 2004	p.80	9%
<input type="checkbox"/> LEISURE SUIT LARRY	p.66	3%

DONE WHEN IT'S DONE...

ON THE DISC PCG scores archive in our database > Resources

TITLE

TITLE	PUBLISHER	UK ETA	FATE
Vampire Bloodlines	Activision	Nov 19	Just missed this issue. Will sink our teeth in next.
Sid Meier's Pirates!	Atari	Nov 26	Arr. Release date buccaneering back and forth.
Alexander	Ubisoft	Nov 26	No opportunity for a preview? Not a good sign.
Championship Manager 5	Eidos	December	A project rumoured to be in crisis. We're concerned.
Chronicles of Riddick	Vivendi	December	Vin Diesel endorsed FPS, enjoyable on XBox.
Armies of Exigo	Electronic Arts	December 3	Warcraft-lite RTS misses review slot. Worrying.
Children of the Nile	Sega	January	Expected this month, but requires sand polish.
World of Warcraft	Vivendi	February	America gets to try the MMO beforehand. Grr.
Star Wars: Republic Commando	Activision	February	Something stirs in the clone vats, see p42.
Battlefield 2	Electronic Arts	February	More details on the modern FPS sequel next issue.
Playboy: The Mansion	Ubisoft	February	It's <i>The Sims</i> , but with more feather boas. Yub Yub.
Close Combat: First to Fight	Take Two	February	Even the US army can't prevent this slipping.
Knights of the Old Republic 2	Activision	February	Confluence of talent and the Force detailed on p35.
Brothers in Arms	Ubisoft	March	Developers still researching Brie, see p34 for why.
Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory	Ubisoft	March	Sneaky sequel delayed for own good.
STALKER: Shadow of Chernobyl	THQ	May	One of the most ambitious games of next year.
Freedom Force vs the Third Reich	Digital Jesters	Spring	We've seen the latest (hilarious) build. More soon.
EverQuest II	Ubisoft	Spring	The beta is ongoing. We're playing as a Ratonga.
SWAT 4	Vivendi	Spring	An unknown quantity, but the developer is super!
Settlers: Heritage of Kings	Ubisoft	Spring	Blue Byte brought their game to us. It's pretty.
Trackmania: Sunrise	Digital Jesters	Spring	Worthy stunt sequel. On course for prompt release.
Ghost Recon 2	Ubisoft	Spring	Console orientated shooter sequel. Looks violent.
Dungeon Siege 2	Microsoft	Spring	Hack and slash RPG quietly gaining a reputation.
F.E.A.R.	Vivendi	Summer	Little girl makes men explode. We giggle.
Darwinia	Pinnacle	Summer	Introversion boys will release this in their own time.

£5 OFF

at Virgin Megastores

This voucher entitles the holder to £5 off Half-Life 2 at Virgin Megastores. This offer cannot be used in conjunction with any other promotional voucher or offer. The offer cannot be used for cash and cannot be used in conjunction with any other promotional voucher or offer. The offer is valid at any Virgin Megastore or Virgin Megastore Express store until 24/12/04.

Sales Asst. Initials: _____

Receipt no.: _____

Store no.: _____

whatever turns you on.

HALF-LIFE 2

2 412431 005000

Barcode

NEXT ISSUE OF PC GAMER ON SALE DECEMBER 23

PC GAMER

RECOMMENDS

The best games of the last few months



FOOTBALL MANAGER Management

"The same genre-leading game SI have always delivered, but under a new name."

PCG 142 90%



THE SIMS 2 Management

"You'll never run out of things to do. This is an extraordinary game. Don't play it. Live it."

PCG 140 92%



PACIFIC FIGHTERS Flight Sim

"A complete joy to fly. Nothing can boast a better mix of quality and quantity."

PCG 142 86%



HALF-LIFE 2 First-Person Shooter

"This is the one unmissable game. You have to experience it for yourself."

PCG 141 96%



ROME: TOTAL WAR Real-Time Strategy

"Rome is beautiful, consistent and a truly great game. Give yourself unto Caesar."

PCG 141 95%

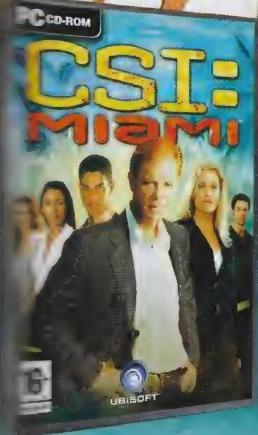
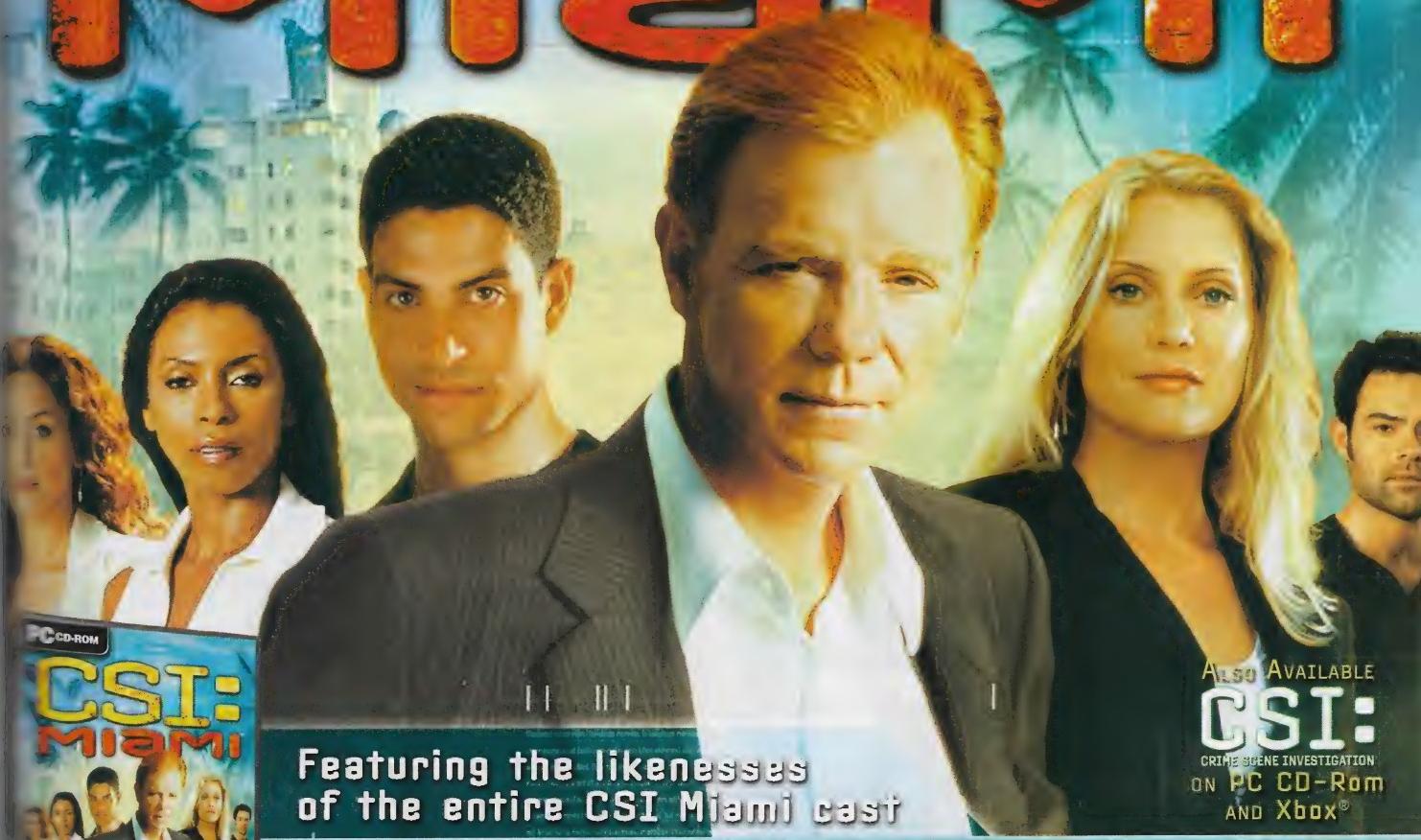


CITY OF HEROES Massively Multiplayer

"It's polished, stylish fun has hooked virtually everyone on GAMER. Go and earn your cape, hero."

PCG 142 85%

CSI: MIAMI



Featuring the likenesses
of the entire CSI Miami cast

ALSO AVAILABLE
CSI:
CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION
ON PC CD-Rom
AND Xbox®

OUT ON 26TH
NOVEMBER 2004

AVAILABLE NOW AT
PC WORLD
The Computer Superstore
for nearest store call
08702 420444

£5 OFF
with this voucher

In-store price £19.99

VOUCHER PRICE

£14 .99 Inc
VAT

PC WORLD
The Computer Superstore

FOR STORE USE ONLY
Outfit Code: 302865

Store to retain
voucher once
processed

Voucher Valid
Until 31/01/2005



6+

PC CD-ROM



CSIMIAMI.UBI.COM

and elements and characters thereof © 2002-2004 CBS Broadcasting Inc. and Alliance Atlantis Productions, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Software © 2004 Ubisoft Entertainment, All Rights Reserved. Ubisoft and the Ubisoft logo are trademarks of Ubisoft Entertainment in the U.S. and/or other countries. CSI Miami is a registered trademark of Alliance Atlantis Communications Inc. Used under license. All rights reserved. Alliance Atlantis with the stylized "A" design is a registered trademark of Alliance Atlantis Communications Inc. CBS and the CBS eye design are trademarks of their respective owners. No celebrity names are implied. Developed by 369 Interactive. All Rights Reserved. Made with Macromedia is a trademark of Macromedia, Inc. Microsoft, Xbox and the Xbox logo are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft.

BIG GAME HUNT

The definitive guide to the best games on PC

MODERN GREAT

ALTERNATIVE

GENRE CLASSIC

FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS

HALF-LIFE 2

Vivendi
Valve
www.valvesoftware.com



"The definitive statement of the last five years of first-person shooters... This is the one unmissable game."

PCG 141 96%

Also recommended: Halo: Combat Evolved ■ Medal of Honour: Allied Assault ■ No-One Lives Forever 2 ■ Serious Sam ■ Far Cry ■ Thief: Deadly Shadows ■ Tribes: Vengeance

REAL-TIME STRATEGY

ROME: TOTAL WAR

Activision
Creative Assembly
www.totalwar.com
Demo in PCG 140



"Makes Medieval look like a child's toy... A masterpiece of conception, design and execution."

PCG 141 95%

Also recommended: Age of Mythology ■ Perimeter ■ C&C: Generals ■ Homeworld 2 ■ Black & White ■ Sacrifice ■ Nexus: The Jupiter Incident ■ StarCraft ■ Soldiers ■ Warhammer 40K: Dawn of War

MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER

PLANETSIDE

Ubisoft
SOE
www.planetside.com
Client on PCG 127 (DVD)



"Vast fronts of virtual warfare rage across an absurdly beautiful alien planet. The experience is timeless."

PCG 124 93%

Also recommended: EverQuest ■ Star Wars: Galaxies ■ Dark Age of Camelot ■ Shawdowbane ■ Neocron ■ Time of Defiance ■ Asheron's Call ■ Anarchy Online ■ Final Fantasy XI ■ City of Heroes

TACTICAL SHOOTER

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS 2

Take Two
Illusion Softworks
www.hiddenanddangerous.com/hd2
Demo in PCG 133



"Militaristic, squad-based action adventure. If you're not enjoying this game, there's something wrong."

PCG 130 88%

Also recommended: Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon ■ Battlezone 2 ■ Hostile Waters ■ Delta Force: Black Hawk Down ■ SWAT 3 ■ Freedom Fighters ■ Hidden & Dangerous Deluxe

ADVENTURE

BROKEN SWORD 3

THQ
Revolution
www.brokensword.com
Demo in PCG 130



"The rebirth of the genre. A beautiful story, told in a brand-new way. A lot of love has gone into making this game."

PCG 129 87%

Also recommended: Sam and Max Hit the Road ■ Day of the Tentacle ■ The Longest Journey ■ The Secret of Monkey Island 2 ■ Beyond Good And Evil ■ Bladerunner ■ Little big Adventure 2

ALTERNATIVE

DOOM 3

Activision
id Software
www.doom3.com
Demo in PCG 142



"Slim, lean, undiluted, pure... Savour every moment of a game that couldn't have been made by anyone else."

PCG 139 90%

Also recommended: Halo: Combat Evolved ■ Medal of Honour: Allied Assault ■ No-One Lives Forever 2 ■ Serious Sam ■ Far Cry ■ Thief: Deadly Shadows ■ Tribes: Vengeance

RISE OF NATIONS

Microsoft
Big Huge Games
www.microsoft.com/games/
Demo in PCG 126



"A stunning synthesis of Civilization and Age of Empires that no serious strategy fan should be without"

PCG 124 88%

Also recommended: Age of Mythology ■ Perimeter ■ C&C: Generals ■ Homeworld 2 ■ Black & White ■ Sacrifice ■ Nexus: The Jupiter Incident ■ StarCraft ■ Soldiers ■ Warhammer 40K: Dawn of War

EVE ONLINE

Crucial
Crowd Control
www.eve-online.com
Client on PCG 132



"A slow burning, complex and utterly beautiful MMORPG. Live that Iain M Banks dream."

PCG 124 90%

Also recommended: EverQuest ■ Star Wars: Galaxies ■ Dark Age of Camelot ■ Shawdowbane ■ Neocron ■ Time of Defiance ■ Asheron's Call ■ Anarchy Online ■ Final Fantasy XI ■ City of Heroes

WARCRAFT III

Vivendi
Blizzard
www.blizzard.com/war3
Demo in PCG 117



"Spell-binding. Just what the witch doctor ordered. Classic strategy with a splash of roleplaying."

PCG 112 90%

ULTIMA ONLINE

Electronic Arts
Origin
www.owo.com



"A spell-bindingly addictive RPG and a genuine milestone in gaming history. An ever-changing wonder."

PCG 52 90%

TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX: RAVEN SHIELD

Ubisoft
Red Storm
www.raven-shield.com



"Planning carries as much weight as an itchy trigger-finger. Almost a tutorial on real-world firearms and their etiquette."

PCG 120 86%

Also recommended: Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon ■ Battlezone 2 ■ Hostile Waters ■ Delta Force: Black Hawk Down ■ SWAT 3 ■ Freedom Fighters ■ Hidden & Dangerous Deluxe

OPERATION FLASHPOINT

Codemasters
Bohemia
www.flashpoint985.com
Demo in PCG 96



"Takes the soldier sim into new territory. A compulsive slice of modern warfare. Sign up now."

PCG 98 89%

IN MEMORIAM

Ubisoft
Lexis Numerique
www.inmemoriam-thegame.com



"A new idea, executed with macabre finesse. A fantastic surprise. You'll not have played anything else like it."

PCG 130 81%

Also recommended: Sam and Max Hit the Road ■ Day of the Tentacle ■ The Longest Journey ■ The Secret of Monkey Island 2 ■ Beyond Good And Evil ■ Bladerunner ■ Little big Adventure 2

GRIM FANDANGO

LucasArts
In-house
www.lucasarts.com/products/grim
Demo in PCG 83



"The slickest, cleverest and most enjoyable adventure games this world has seen. Play a gaming legend today."

PCG 62 95%

MIND THE GAP...

Want a complete collection of your favourite magazine? Of course you do. So ring our back issues hotline and let us fill you in.

0870 444 8660



GAMER OBSCURA How to find the classics

The major high street retailers aren't the only source of PC games. Computer Exchange and Gamestation both carry second-hand stock, while eBay and the Amazon Marketplace are full of ageing classics online. If you're still having problems, start scouring the small ads, charity shops and car-boot

sales - ancient relics can be found for next to nothing. There's an extensive listing of retailer contacts in the PC GAMER Directory in the Resources section on the disc.

ON THE DISC More games in the Bigger Game Hunt > Resources

PlayStation®2



Free PlayStation®2 Network Adaptor. Broadband from BT. Everything you need to conquer the world.

 Broadband from BT[†] for online gaming will bring you closer to total domination. Sign up now and you could get the Network Adaptor* and, through your PlayStation®2 and existing phone line, online access to the finest gaming minds on the planet. And if they get in your way, you can just blow them out of it. Experience mastery of the universe without even standing up.

bt.com/onlinegaming

0800 328 9041

BT 

More power to you



EXTRA-LIFE

Play outside the box

DOWNLOADER

MOD NEWS

DIY

LONG PLAY

CULTURE

SPORTS

THE FINEST GAMING FREEBIES AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Sad to see Elvis Costello betraying his pacifist roots.



Kevlar remains the fabric of choice for fashion-conscious anti-terrorists.



CELEB

HI, I'M A GAME DEVELOPER

Name Thomas Shaefer
Credits Boiling Point

My fave game: I'm playing as the Julian House in Rome: Total War. I've taken over Spain, France, Germany and just settling Britain. I'm always asked to attack Rome, but I don't want to yet.

My fave mod:

I've downloaded all the old UT2003 mods. My last project used the Unreal engine. I like to see what everyone else is doing with it.

The thing I'm most looking forward to:

Fable. All the goals that Peter Molyneux wants to reach in his games (freedom in character development) are the same goals I want to reach in Boiling Point.



ENEMY TERRITORY MOD

True Combat: Elite

A freebie mod for a freebie game? Count us in

Enemy Territory gave us zip-fast combat in a cartoon WWII setting. And it really did give it to us: the mod was donated to the public by id Software, a gift for any dedicated PC gamer. Now, the developers of *True Combat*, an excellent modern day warfare mod for *Quake III* have taken it on themselves to upgrade their idea for *ET*. It's even more freebie gaming.

True Combat: Elite offers realistic, modern warfare in dense urban settings, reminiscent of *Counter-Strike*. The weapons include a brilliant Benelli

Shotgun, the world famous AK-47 and M4. And yes, there's the usual complement of smoke, frag and concussion grenades.

Yet, this isn't *Counter-Strike*. First and foremost, simply running around a corner,

DOWN LOADER

Enemy Territory gets a dose of modern combat

guns blazing, is the quickest way to the spectator cam: dead and forgotten. There's no cross-hair on screen,

instead, to aim effectively, you need to peer down the iron-sights by tapping the right mouse-button. Automatically, this slows the game right down. To take a choke point, you need to make a plan, working as a team.

One player draws the fire, the other lobs in a flash grenade. The rest storm the front.

The ageing technology has been pushed to its limits by the *True Combat: Elite* team, with high resolution textures being applied to almost every model and map. The result: a mod that looks fine, and runs like a greased whippet on all but the most ancient of systems. If you have a PC, you can probably play this.



LET US SPEND YOUR BANDWIDTH

Use the Download Manager to judge download speed, or find the best gaming picks of the month on the DVD.

BROADBAND BREEZE

BROADBAND BREAKER

10Mb

50Mb

150Mb

1Gb

56k friendly

Modem mare

Modem meltdown

Nightie night

PCGAMER DOWNLOAD MANAGER

120Mb

Link www.truecombat.com

Discs On the DVD

Requires Patched Enemy Territory

Free gaming that you can't do without.

HALF-LIFE MOD

Half-Life: The Trenches

We track down Half-Life's trench connection

Town Watch

The machinima march continues as Rooster Teeth Productions (Red vs Blue) are working with EA to produce a sitcom using *The Sims 2*. The Strangerhood begins with an entire neighbourhood awaking one morning with no idea who they are, or why they're here. Typical quote: "I think I solved one mystery. I now know that my name is Sam. Apparently, I'm the type of person who writes his name in his pants."

Trigged? You can find the first episode of *The Strangerhood* on this month's DVD. The series is still finding its feet and doesn't yet have the same bite as Red vs Blue but it's worth following the regular updates at www.strangerhood.com.



Those grenades are lethal. When one lands in your foxhole, get out of there. Briskly.



OI FRITZ! This barren bit of wasteland is British and I'll defend it to the death!

There isn't much time left for *Half-Life* mods to make an impact as the sequel prepares to change the world. Still, *HL: The Trenches* is worth a goosey: a fine example of a Total Conversion that takes inspiration from the mud and guts of World War I.

As a Tommy on the front-line, you're given a bolt-action rifle, a bayonet, a couple of rounds of ammo and grenades, and told to get on with it. Maps are tight, with trenches providing much needed subterranean cover. Tactical positioning is everything as the weapons are single shot. Take one for the team and you're guaranteed a slow

death, rotting in the Flanders mud. Like *Day of Defeat* and *Battlefield*, respawns are synchronised every 30 seconds or so, enabling players to form groups before venturing off for the 'big push'. Two-player classes are included in this first release: the light-infantry man, and the bomber, with cordite and blast-powder strapped to his chest.

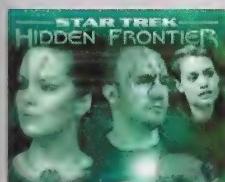
PCGAMER DOWNLOAD MANAGER

	70Mb
Link	www.thetrenches.net
Discs	On the DVD
Requires	Half-Life (Steam)
A solid release, will the community embrace it?	

FILE DUMP

Light Bytes

Tim Edwards nibbles the online baguette



HIDDEN FRONTIER

I haven't laughed at *Star Trek* fans for ages. Clearly a problem. Then a friend forwarded a link to a fan-made movie with a special effects budget to match your local amateur dramatics company. It's formed by aspiring LA lads, those desperate for a break in mainstream television looking for something they can back on their show-reels. The bit: just how seriously it takes their every word. There's a death scene in the episode that reduced us to tears. www.hiddenfrontier.org

WCG THEME TUNE

Zippos in the air for this astonishing slice of mid-eighties mullet rock, courtesy of the recent World Cyber Games. The lyrics are a clarion call for online gamers. "You and I have met before, through the magic of cyberspace," the synthesiser solos are clearly the product of a childhood spent listening to John-Michel Jarre and Whitesnake. When the arpeggios hit, you better be underground. We're not sure if this is inspiring, or just a little bit scary. If you make a better melody then it's important that you write to us. Together, we can defeat this evil. www.worldcybergames.com

HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY

As a tribute to Douglas Adams, the BBC are re-broadcasting the seminal radio version of the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. They've even posted an updated version of the excellent Infocom text adventure on their website. Thanks to the magic of Flash and Javascript, you're magically transported to Arthur Dent's bedroom. Here's a hint for the first section: turn on the lights, wear the dressing gown, take the analgesic. From that point on, you're alone. www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/hitchhikers

DIE ANSTALT

"In this soulless world, its inhabitants are lonely yet spoilt by a consumer culture. This gives birth to frustration, and makes one lonelier. The last friend remaining to all is a cuddly toy. Yet these creatures cannot defend themselves. They cannot run away. Insanity is their only way of escape." In this charming flash presentation, you conduct psychiatric examinations on a range of teddy bears and stuffed rhinos. It's utterly bizarre, yet strangely touching. These poor, psychotic plush toys need our help. Don't let them suffer alone. www.parapluesch.de

MACHINIMA

BOT

Why should I download it? Because it demonstrates the high standard of machinima the *UT2004* community is creating. It tells the story of a deathmatch robot, endowed with self-awareness by its mother-creator.



DOWN LOADER SUICIDAL ROBOT

1 MATERNAL AI

The Motherlode is revealed - a feminine metallic blob spewing out legions of robots.



2 THE SPARK

Among the death-bots, one has arisen. He sees the futility of his existence.



3 THE JUMP

He can't face a two-second life cut short by a rocket. He goes straight down.



4 MIRACLE CENTRAL

He's not dead, others did the same. Robo-culture exists. There is hope...

PCGAMER DOWNLOAD MANAGER

	9Mb
Link	www.makesomethingunreal.com
Discs	On the DVD
Requires	Windows Media Player

Morose, tear-jerking AI tragedy. Sniffle.



CodeRED Alien Arena

Close encounters of the hurt kind

Cheesy, B-movie action awaits in the latest free deathmatch from COR Entertainment. Think ridiculous ray guns and bulb-headed aliens in a Flash Gordon fragger built on a touched-up *Quake II* engine.

For a 100Mb download you get the whole standalone package so you don't even need a copy of id's classic to play. And, like the previous COR games (*Battle for Earth*, *Martian Chronicles*) *Alien Arena* somehow squeezes another few ounces of goodness from the antique graphics engine. All manner of



You'll recognise some of the weapons but others will be a little more unusual.

lighting and texture wizardry provides the miracle facelift and there's even two versions so low-spec machines can play without all the latest window dressing.

We get ten gloriously crafted, stylishly futuristic levels, an arsenal of weaponry – some familiar, some fantastical – and full bot support. This is a tournament deathmatch that's as fast and frenzied to play as *Quake III*, and also sports an original, grinding nu-metal soundtrack.

A separate bot configurator tool enables customisation of your outlandish AI opponents and, of course, you have the option to go online and play multiplayer on COR's own hosted servers. *Alien Arena* will continue to evolve too, in fact COR have already released a new 1v1 map pack with three new arenas.

PC GAMER DOWNLOAD MANAGER

DATA FLOW	97 Mb
Link	www.planetquake.com/cor/codered
Discs	On the DVD
Requires	600MHz CPU, 128Mb RAM
	Good old-fashioned martian butt-kicking



There's even the option to fiddle with your enemies using the bot configurator tool.

The levels might not look stunning but are fun to play.



CELEB ROSSFERATU

For 24 centuries, British chums, I have been a creature of secrets. Such is the life of Wampyr!

But all this is coming to an end. I have seen mankind achieve greatness and the human race now imitates the gods which once it worshipped. Over it all, I have watched like a benevolent (if continually snacking) father, subtly influencing the slow progress of history.

Always in the shadows, I have guided the affairs of men. Who whispered in the Caesars' ears as they built the greatest civilisation on Earth? Who inspired the men of letters as literary classics were crafted? Who ensured men would walk on the moon?

But the time has come for me to loosen my grip and shuffle off this mortal coil. Yes, Rossferatu will be no more! But cry not – mankind's latest achievement is its greatest and you need my nurturing skills no longer.

So it will be with an icy tear and a cold heart that I pack my unearthly possessions into my coffin and prepare for one final journey back to the misty mountains of my homeland. What awaits me there? Why, nothing less than man's latest and greatest achievement! For even as I write, the castle's Steam account is completing its *Half-Life 2* upload, and there shall I indulge my gaming passions one last time before I sleep. Sweet sleep... resting happily in the knowledge of a job well done. Farewell.

Calling all mods, indy games, machinima, shareware... Send your links to:

mark.sutherns@futurenet.co.uk

BOTS

NS: Hivemind

Online alien menace taken offline

Alien hunting isn't easy for nervous newbs, despite the *Natural Selection* community's helpful attitude towards beginners.

Happily *Hivemind* works like a crash course for the brilliant *Half-Life* Giger-mod as you can develop your skills against multiple AI bots in the privacy of a private server, rather than



Save your blushes and find your feet in the safety of this private server.



among the unforgiving melee of multi-player online combat.

Hivemind is the perfect way to experience the upgrade system, and get to grips with the maps. You're going to need to understand where to place upgrade systems and defensive turrets; how to fend off leaping aliens and rampaging xeno-rhinos, all the while navigating tight corridors.

Playing against humans in these conditions can be embarrassing, particularly if it takes you a while to get the hang of it, so we recommend taking out your frustrations against a cold, calculating AI.



Tunnel Time

Your PC can be a magical internet port thanks to Xlink Kai, a piece of tunnelling software – enabling console owners to System Link or LAN games by connecting their console to the PC. The holy grail, or Mario Kart, is already available. All you need to do is sling a LAN cable betwixt console and run the Xlink software, then run a search for like-minded players. Download the latest version from: www.teamxlink.co.uk. Xbox and Gamecube connections are all supported.

PC GAMER DOWNLOAD MANAGER

DATA FLOW	0.5 Mb
Link	www.natural-selection.org
Discs	On the Disc
Requires	<i>Natural Selection</i> , <i>Half-Life</i>
	Sharp mind required to defeat sharper AI

STAR MAP

EVE Online Tools

Would you Adam and EVE it?



Mining in space can be a tricky business, so if EVE is making your head hurt, don't fret...



...help is at hand in the form of this handy suitcase of tools. Phew.

Lord knows, playing EVE is hard. There's just so much to do out there, in that massive universe. To get results, you need to make choices every step of the way, choosing the right ship, the right character class, the right specialisations and the right race. As you start the game, the options can be bewildering – what's to do?

Thankfully, the players have been working feverishly on solutions. At www.eve-i.com you'll find a suite of tools designed to show you the best route to your ultimate goals.

Within the suite you'll discover a character generator, a combat log

analyser (for the obsessive who *must* know the damage their new shiny laser cannon is inflicting), skill planners and an offline version of the absolutely gorgeous – if somewhat bewildering – in-game map.

If you're a dedicated space-miner, you need to invest a little bandwidth in all these tools.

PC GAMER DOWNLOAD MANAGER	
0.1Mb	
DATA FLOW	
Link	www.eve-i.com
Discs	No, it's a web based app.
Requires	EVE Online
Virtual life just got easier	

FREEWARE

The Universal

Earn a fortune in manure stocks

A-Tractor, the odd Elite-with-tractors online trading game has spawned a semi-sequel. *The Universal* is a free-to-play online trading game, here you can buy and sell anything including bi-planes, racing cars, hot-air balloons, tractors and manure.

Two types of world are included: free-play and economy. The free-play



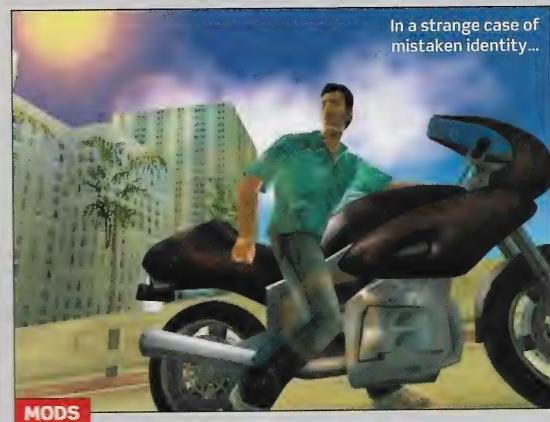
We might want to take some evasive action here in order to avoid that windmill.



worlds are places to mess about, piloting starships and alien craft, enjoying fun and frolics in the sky.

Economy worlds are the shark pools where the real cut-throats make a killing. Budding entrepreneurs attempt to build a fortune from their tiny start-up acorns. You aim to buy cheap and sell high by supplying the demands of stores and factories across the land. Think trading in *Elite*. And if it doesn't work out, you can simply blast off the planet and seek out a new life, elsewhere. *The Universal* is totally unique – we urge you to explore it.

PC GAMER DOWNLOAD MANAGER	
6Mb	
DATA FLOW	
Link	theuniversal.net
Discs	On the disc
Requires	Low end PC, manure fetish
Strangely compelling MMO. Spare any shackles?	



In a strange case of mistaken identity...

GTA: Vice City Mod Archive

More mods than Brighton beach

A little change goes a long way. A lot of change goes all the way. That's the thinking behind this collection of mods, vehicles, tweaks and patches, brought together as one monster patch by the prodigious Switch Designs team. Applying the 113 new files here will alter Vice City to an extraordinary extent. AAT tanks from *Attack of the Clones* replace the rather ordinary Rhino; helicopters are transformed into Gundam robots; Tommy Vercetti disappears, replaced by CJ, from the forthcoming *San Andreas* and there's even a lunar lander floating in the city, somewhere. We can't mount the patch for legal reasons, but you can download it from <http://free.hostdepartment.com/s/switchdesigns/> ...

THE MOD	WHAT IS IT?
	A very long time ago (the 80's), in a galaxy far, far away, (Miami) the evil Trade Federation (Donald Love) faced a new threat (Jedi). This superb little vehicle patch replaces the Skimmer seaplane with a striking, and rather nippy, Naboo Starfighter.
	What's more effective at fighting crime? A plump policeman or an even plumper pumpkin? Install this to celebrate Halloween, replacing all the Vice City police department cars with bright orange, glowing pumpkins. Scary stuff.
	What's better than a speedboat? A speedboat with a water-skier hanging off the back of it. What's even better than that? A speedboat with the infamous Candy Sux, Vice City's foremost adult entertainer, hanging off the back of it. Nice.
	Ditch the helicopters. What we really need is big-eyed, little green men and lots of flying saucers. This simple patch replaces the vicious Hunter attack helicopter with a laser-beam spouting UFO. Abduct all humans. As quick as you can.
	A whole new mission system, incorporated into Vice City. The poor residents, already up to their wingnuts in muggings, brutality and gang warfare, are now infected with a zombie virus. Cure it by zapping the victims. It's the only way to be sure.



Dead Man Walking Levels

Custom-made levels for the *Max Payne 2* sub-game

Dead Man Walking is a furiously fun *Max Payne 2* mode unlocked by completing the singleplayer story. The idea is simplicity itself. Blast your way through claustrophobic levels filled with entire armies of

goons. The question is: how long can you last against the relentless onslaught?

If you're having problems remember your *Max Payne* essentials. Bullet time is accrued through violence – the more

killing you do, the longer you can spend in slow motion. Most of the levels contain a chemists-worth of painkillers: press TAB to swallow a handful, but be aware that they take of couple of seconds to act – so if you feel in

any danger, take them early.

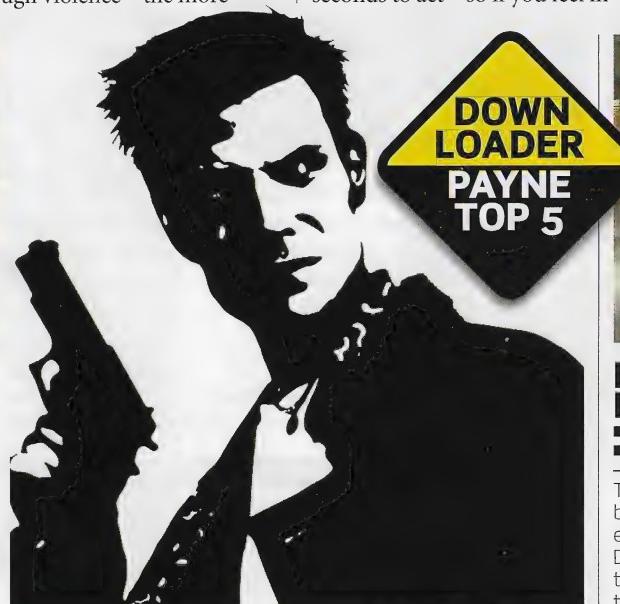
It's all against the clock too, so we've set a few PCG par times for you to beat – email in a screenshot of your best time to pcgamer@futurenet.co.uk and we'll get the best in a later issue.



CHATEAU_2

■ By JC Dentonggg ■ Par Time 4:36
■ Inspired by Matrix Reloaded

This superb recreation of the chateau fight in *The Matrix Reloaded* scores one major point over its opponents: the room is hugely destructible. Your shots will tear through banisters and pillars, knock over statues, and rip the precious artwork hanging on the walls. The accompanying music is also ripped – from the film, meaning that we can't put it on our coverdiscs: instead, head to www.levels4you.com/sections/maxpayne2.



THE BEST

PRISON

■ By David 'Thnatiq' Marquis ■ Par Time 2:08
■ Inspired by The Rock

This is a riot. Literally. Set in a detention centre, *Prison* is the finest DMW map we've played, superior even to the official efforts unlocked at the end of the game. You'll need three dimensional awareness, as the goons will spawn on all three levels of the tiered balconies. To stand a chance, head up to the top floor and rain down lead from above, rather than get involved in the melee. Just watch out for those red, explosive barrels. If you're caught in the blast then you're toast.



MURDER BURGER INC

■ By D-Silence ■ Par Time 3:01
■ Inspired by Falling Down

No, Supersize this. In this frantic shootout set in a fast-food restaurant, you'll need to cobble together a temporary arsenal from the weapons carried by the serving staff and the constantly respawning, intensely angry customers. *Murder Burger* is filled with incidental physical detail, like the way a grenade will blow out an entire staircase, trapping those on the top floor. Perfect fodder for a second grenade.



BREAKING DAYLIGHTS

■ By Mikael Paunila ■ Par Time 1:35
■ Inspired by Bad Boys 2

There's nowhere to hide in this frost-bitten building site. The spawn points are everywhere, making this one of the hardest DMW maps. Canny players will circle around the central pillar, collecting ammunition from the steady stream of corpses. One useful point to note: the arrival of AI is preceded by a high pitched whine – use this to predict where to place your shots.



ADDRESS UNKNOWN

■ By Clement 'Corwin' Menendez ■ Par Time 2:09
■ Inspired by Face Off

Miss the bizarrely beguiling fairground levels from *Max Payne 2*? This should satiate your taste for psychedelic strangeness. *Address Unknown* is a Dead Man Walking shootout based around the hand-drawn, cardboard cut-out suburbs in the Fun House. As a plus the figure-of-eight manner in which the rooms are connected rooms means you've always got somewhere else to go: there are no dead ends, no traps.

START-UP >

1 Copy the archived levels from the disc to your desktop. Keep them in a single folder.

2 Unzip the levels, and copy the .mp2m file to your *Max Payne* installation directory.

3 Start *Max*. When the loading dialogue appears select Custom Game. Click your map.

4 Start a new game, select Dead Man Walking from the menu, then begin the slaughter.

No Contest!



Q17+... is the most convincing reason for gamers finally make that jump to TFT that we have seen."

GamersEurope.com, 10/2004

Now you can enjoy state-of-the-art PC gaming with a Hyundai ImageQuest TFT display engineered specifically with high-end gamers in mind.

12 ms response time, high contrast ratio and direct digital signal ensure you can now focus on the game without distractions. Connect your controllers to the USB hub and enjoy sharp, clear and completely ghost free images.

Allow yourself to be seduced by a Hyundai ImageQuest TFT and get the most out of your gaming experience.

www.hyundaiQ.com info@hyundaiQ.co.uk

Hyundai ImageQuest Q17+

TFT | 12 ms response time | USB Hub | Contrast ratio 600:1
D-SUB/DVI-D input | Headphone jack and speakers
Tilt and angle adjustable | DVI Cable included
Hyundai ImageQuest High-End PC Gaming TFT displays range from 15 to 19 inch in size.

 **HYUNDAI**
HYUNDAI IMAGEQUEST



World of PadMan

When Lilliputians attack

This is the *nicest* mod you're ever likely to play. *World of PadMan* is a selection of new maps, weapons, character models and power-ups that transform the drab gothic world of *Quake III Arena* into a water-balloon fight in gorgeous primary colours, taking place right there in your bedroom. It's like the characters from Toy Story settling their differences with a jolly paintball match. These characters might only be three inches tall, but they're punching well above their weight. They're *Quake*'s equivalent of Smurfs, playing deathmatch across the sofa. The character models are imbued with a strange sense of life, all enormous grins, wide eyes and punk-rock hair.

Even a quick botmatch impresses. The arenas are lovingly crafted domestic settings: kitchens, garages, bathrooms and gardens, filled to bursting with family friendly weaponry. Super-soakers, paintball guns, water-balloons and aggressive



ducks are all part and parcel of *Pad*-play. Even the maps are structured differently to most deathmatch games: single open arenas predominate, off of which you'll find hideyholes and secret passages. Use the bounce pads in the kitchen, and you'll be flung up into the cupboards, fighting among gravy granules and tins of soup. A mistimed jump in the bathroom will send you slipping down the toilet, around the U-bend, and resurfacing in the drain attached to the shower. And it's worth exploring. Hidden among the domestic detritus are all manner of non-lethal comedy weapons.

None-lethal, but hilarious. Our favourite is the shoulder-mounted hosepipe, the 'Boaster'. Fire it into the path of a sprinting opponent and they'll slip, straight forwards, losing all contact with the ground. The Balloony is a water-grenade launcher requiring great care to handle. If you don't drench your target on the first try, the balloon will bounce right back in your

ON THE DVD Enjoy the full version of the *World of PadMan* mod, including those crafty Padbots > Mods

face, soaking you. If you're looking for something a little more traditional, try the excellent 'BubbleG', a rapid-fire paint gun.

While real joy can be found playing against the bots, we recommend hopping online and testing out a novel game mode 'Spray Your Colour'. Fraggering an enemy Pad will give you a paint cartridge, while opening up a portal to a secret room. In there, you can graffiti the walls with your personal logo, scoring points. At the end of the round, the player or team with the most points wins the round.

TIM EDWARDS

PC GAMER DOWNLOAD MANAGER	
	335Mb
Link	www.worldofpadman.com
Type	Single/Multiplayer
Requires	<i>Quake 3 Arena</i>
Small people with big ideas	

START-UP >

1 Install the client from our disc, ensuring that you point it to your *Quake III* directory.

2 Double click the *World of Pad* desktop icon to play. Don't run *Padworld* from the mods menu.

3 Map cycles, however, can be set up from the multiplayer menu. Click the maps you want.

4 Bots can be added by pressing Escape. We recommend at least six or seven of them.

Massively Multiplayer Online Game

ENTER
A WORLD OF
INTRIGUE
AND
DECEPTION

LINEAGE II
THE CHAOTIC CHRONICLE®
Deluxe

WWW.LINEAGE2.COM



www.peg1.info





HELPING TO SPREAD THE WORD OF MOD



Crush them. Crush them under your feet of steel. Yes.



MOD NEWS

Tribes: Vengeance
heads back to its
robo-heavy roots

TRIBES: VENGEANCE

Starsiege: 2845

The future of *Tribes* is its past

Man-size may do the job for tissues but it just doesn't cut it on the battlefields of the future. You need a suit that's not to be sneezed at and that means HERC-size as the metal Kongs of Starsiege: 2845 are known. It's a total conversion for the brilliant *Tribes: Vengeance* that harks back to its *Starsiege* roots, where giant moonsuits clash with the heavy metal of the implacable alien Cybrids.

Jake Massie is the man responsible for organising the 40-strong ClanCore Design Group. "The

community that grew up around *Starsiege* still exists today because of the love of the story," he explains. "When I decided to try to make the project happen, I

simply couldn't conceive of not having a story element. The first person I approached about the story was Blake Hutchins, who penned the stories for the original *Starsiege*, *Starsiege: Tribes*, and *Tribes 2*. I figured if we were going to do a story, we needed to do it right. Somehow I managed to hornswoggle him into coming on board."

ON THE DVD A collection of screenshots, art, and the complete interview with Jake Massie > Galleries

But it's the mega-death hardware that provides the main draw. "HERC are *Starsiege*'s version of mechs," explains Jake, "giant bipedal walking machines of death, and the signature vehicles of the series. Tanks are just what you'd expect, except our version tends to be quite a bit faster... Flyers consist of a fighter/bomber and a trooper carrier/gunship. Juggernauts are similar to a combination of field

artillery and tanks, and are the biggest and most powerful vehicles, but also the slowest."

How will a typical level play? "The combined-arms nature of our design allows us to do some very

Giant
bipedal
machines of
death

interesting combinations in single-player. Obviously we want the player to be familiar with the various aspects of the game by the time they get to the end of the campaign, so we play around with some first-person missions in addition to the more vehicle-centric environments which dominate play. For example, as you chase the Cybrids to the edge of the solar system you come up against the giant deep space platform in the Oort Cloud. It's a conglomeration of asteroids and planetoids hooked together with giant superstructure girders arranged as a globular, polyhedral array. This outpost is a Cybrid construct which the player will have to stage a multi-mission assault on, and so you get to do battle with the 'glitches' in an environment of their making and get a glimpse into the mind of the machines as it were."

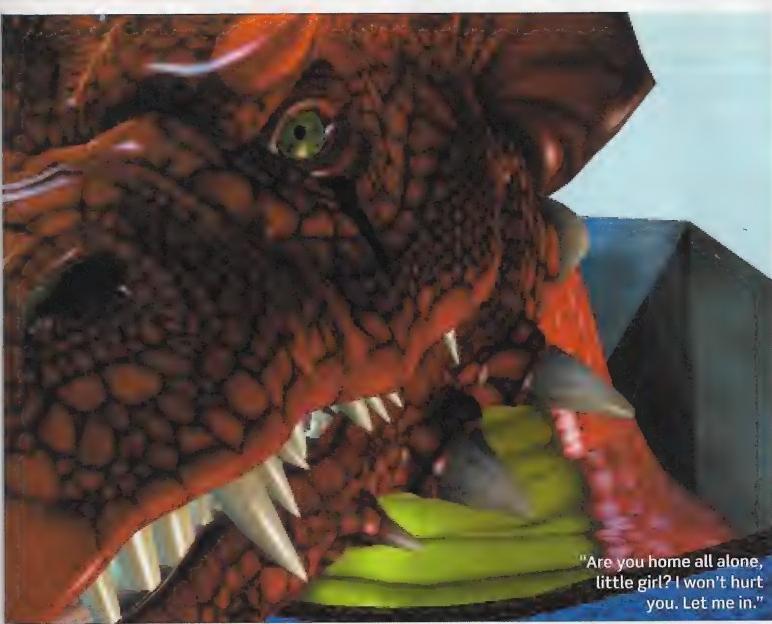
The alpha test for ClanCore's ambitious project begins this very month. Exciting.



In addition to the Flyers, some of *Starsiege*'s tanks will also use anti-gravity to get around.

PC GAMER README

DATA FLOW	Type Singleplayer
	Link www.starsiege2845.com
	Percentage complete 50%



"Are you home all alone, little girl? I won't hurt you. Let me in."

PLANESCAPE: TORMENT

Planescape: Vengeance

Don't trust the skull

Rigor mortis never sets in. Like the Nameless One himself, *Planescape: Torment* simply refuses to die. The community that gathered around the baroque RPG has outlived even *Planescape*'s publishers, the recently deceased Interplay. Now that same community is creating *Planescape: Vengeance*, a new *Planescape* story that extends the setting to the mythical city of Sigil. Living up to the original is a huge undertaking, as Ash McGowan, Vengeance's project lead, realises. "Making a storyline that is just as strong as Black Isle's original, is as hard as it is expressing the story itself: story and game have to find a happy medium, otherwise you lose the bottom to your whole project."

MOD NEWS DEAD AGAIN

In the process, the team aren't afraid to slay a few sacred cows. "The thing that will surprise many is that alignment was killed outright," says Ash. "It's always been a pain, and always badly handled. If you want characters to act somewhat outside their alignment, you always have people gripe and moan about it. This is something that has always plagued D&D. Another thing that very well might surprise the players is that at times even the protagonist speaks. This shouldn't come as a surprise: the main character, Ralex is not a blank template like the characters before him. He has his own thoughts and feelings on some matters, and those have to be taken into consideration."

The game design also emphasises strategy over simple hack and slash. "The spells are very different to what people would normally expect. Fireballs are out. Bouncing explosive skulls, that require a little forethought before you lob them into a melee, are in. Just don't trust where they land."

PCGAMER README

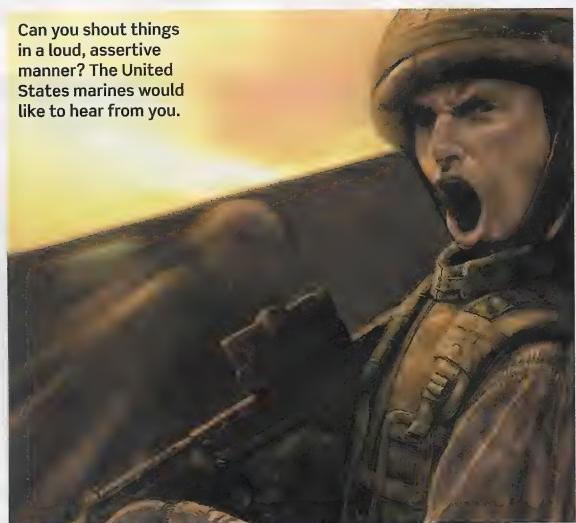
DATA FLOW
Type Singleplayer
Link www.planescape-vengeance.net
Percentage complete 20%



The fantasy RPG's love affair with isometric, pre-rendered graphics will also never die.



Can you shout things in a loud, assertive manner? The United States marines would like to hear from you.



HALF-LIFE 2

Insurgency

Talkin' bout a revolution

There's certainly no shortage of modern conflicts to feed this Source-based project, which transports you to the shellshocked battlefields of the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan for team-based combat

Co-operation will win the day, whether it be a four-man fireteam, an eight-man squad or a full 32-man platoon. A command mode will enable players to bring up an interactive tactical map to issue orders and call in reinforcements, and those who execute successful tactics will be rewarded through a point system that will introduce a chain of command within each faction. But if tactics aren't your thing, there's plenty of opportunity to run and gun: the mod will include team types that enable both styles.

PCGAMER README

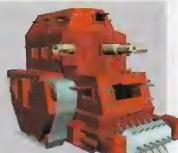
Type Multiplayer
Link www.insurgencymod.net
Percentage complete 40%



DAWN OF WAR

MOD ROUND-UP

A month or so on the shelves and already we've got a handful of mods for Relic's Warhammer 40,000 RTS on the way. In fact the first beta of Epic Legions (<http://epiclegions.warriorhut.net>) is already up for grabs, a mod inspired by the Warhammer Epic ruleset which rushes you straight into large scale battles complete with Titan units. Total War (www.edf.tauniverse.com) is another mini-mod that promotes greater metal-grinding carnage. It triples the number of units available and for good measure adds the Imperial Guard as a selectable faction. As for total conversions, you need look no further than Starforge (www.starforge2004.de), a project that's attempting to fuse Dawn of War with Blizzard's legendary Starcraft sci-fi RTS. Some people are just never satisfied. Grab the latest DoW mods from the disc > mods.

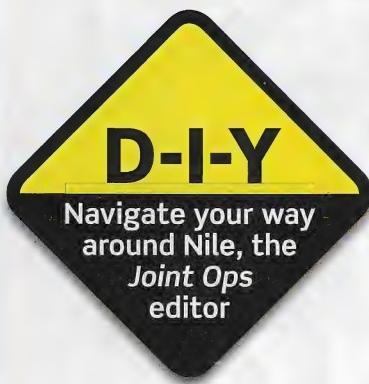




MOD-MAKING AND LEVEL DESIGN MADE EASY

How to make a multiplayer map for Joint Ops

BY DEREK STEDMAN



WHAT WILL IT TAKE?

Skill Easy
Time 2-6 hours

WHAT WILL I NEED?

- A PC that will run Nile
- Nile does not support Wing8/ME
- A copy of Joint Ops
- www.jointopsthegame.com
- The map editor, and sample map
- On the disc > Resources

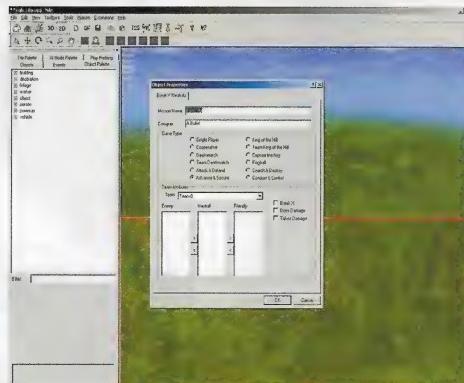
PCGAMER RESOURCE HARVESTER

- The official Joint Ops web site www.jointopsthegame.com
- The community site www.novaworld.com
- Downloads, map database, map-making forums www.dfbarracks.com
- More resources, news, forums www.dfarena.com



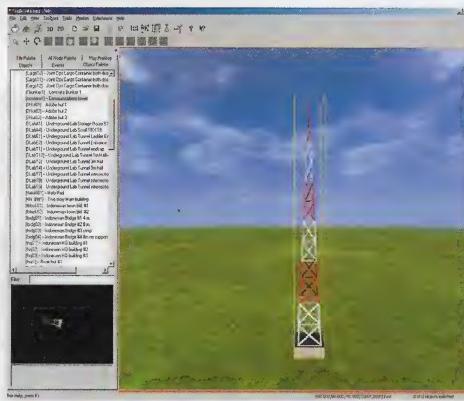
01 GETTING STARTED

Grab yourself a copy of Nile from (www.novalogic.com/downloads.asp) and install it on your PC, DO NOT install it into your *Joint Ops* directory as it will screw up your game installation. You will need to extract the Zip file into a folder on your hard drive. When installation is complete you will need to update Nile using Help > Update from the Main Menu. When Nile prompts you for the resource directory, it is referring to your *Joint Ops* folder.



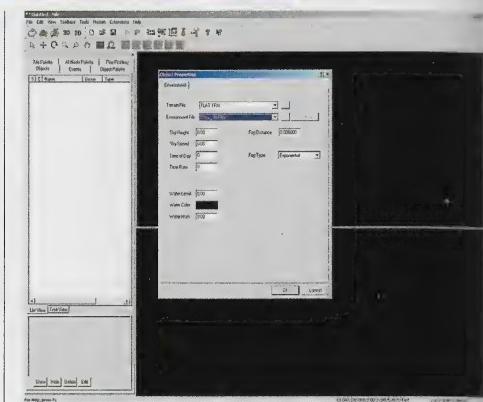
03 WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Next up, click Mission > Level Properties, this dialog will allow you to setup the Mission Name, Designer and Game Type. Make some choices for the first two, and check the Game Type checkbox for Advance And Secure. Now let's take a minute to re-arrange the layout of Nile. Modify it to look like Step 4 by docking the object info toolbar to the left of the screen and dragging your top view window until it fills the remaining space on the screen.



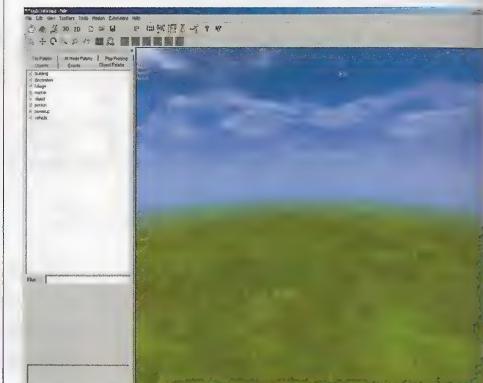
05 PLACING AN OBJECT

To place an item, select the Object Palette tab from the Object Info toolbar. While you have the object tab selected, whatever object is selected in the object palette will be 'attached' to your cursor, this allows you to position the object wherever you want before placing it by left clicking. Using the left and right arrow keys allows you to rotate an object to the left or right. Don't worry about accuracy as you can always adjust an object's location later.



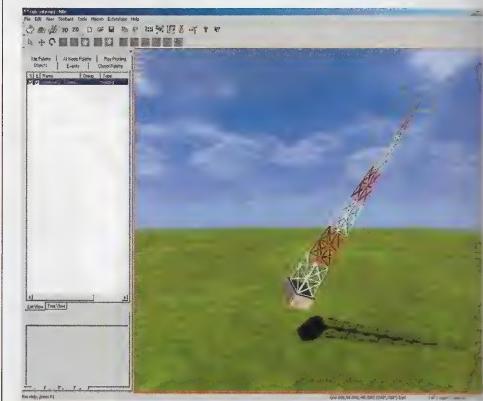
02 CREATING YOUR WORLD

When you first open Nile you're presented with a blank map: until you set up your choices for terrain and environment settings the main display will be black. Click Mission > Terrain Variables from the menu to choose a terrain and environment file - for my example I used FLAT.TRN and FULL_00.ENV. For our example map we will leave these files as they are, however for your own maps its best to try different settings until you're satisfied with the results.



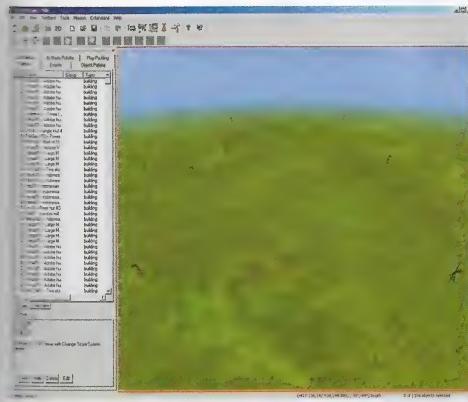
04 LET'S GET MOVING

There are several ways to move around our environment. Moving the camera forward, back, left and right is done using the W, S, A and D keys. The mouse scroll wheel also allows you to move the camera forward and back. To alter the direction the camera faces press the space bar and left click and drag. To slide the camera's position vertically or horizontally while maintaining the direction the camera faces, press Space and right click and drag.



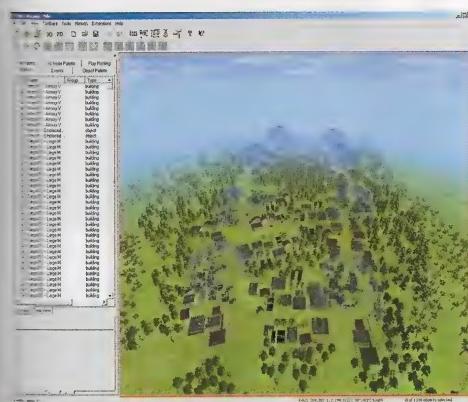
06 MOVING AN OBJECT

To move an object, first select the Object tab from the Object Toolbar, and then use the pointer tool to select the object by clicking it in the 3D display. Once the object is selected, you can move or rotate it by choosing either the move or rotate tool (beside the pointer tool) and then clicking the item and dragging it. Holding shift allows you to move the object up and down, while holding shift and rotating rotates around the horizontal axis of the object.



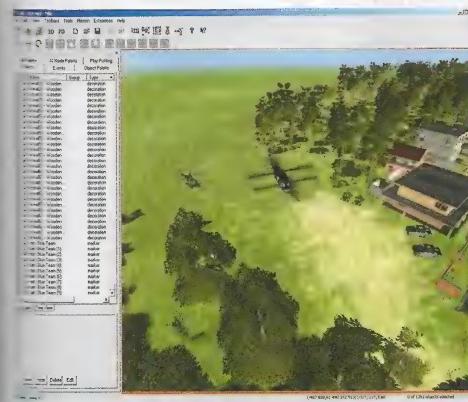
07 MMM, NICE AAS

In the Advance And Secure game type, the action is guided through the use of 'Linear Focus Points'. LFPs are set up as bases, where one base must be captured before you can advance and secure the next one. Once your team captures a base you may respawn there. It's important that before you begin your mapping in earnest you have some idea what layout you want and where to place your LFP bases. Figure 7 shows the layout I chose for my bases.



09 MAPLAND

This is where you put everything into practice. Decide how you want your map laid out, then browse the Objects Palette, and place objects to suit your concept. Remember to keep some areas free of clutter to leave room for roads. While you are mapping, try and picture how people will move about your map and think of how the objects you place will affect the flow of the map. Finally, remember: details make the map.



11 PLAYER SPAWNPOINTS

When players press Space to spawn, they spawn at one of their team's designated spawn points rather than a LFP. Team Spawnpoints are located in the Objects section of the object toolbar, and are placed the same way as you would any other object. The object names for each are Start, Red Team and Start, Blue Team. In general it is best to place at least ten spawnpoints for each team so it's harder for players to camp on spawnpoints.



08 SETTING LFP ATTRIBUTES

LFP spawns must be configured into numbered groups, starting at '1' and incrementing for each LFP. Multiple LFPs can be grouped so that all must be captured before proceeding to the next group. I use eight LFP spawns in four groups numbered one through four. Set the Team attribute for each spawnpoint to either 0 (Neutral), 1 (Blue), or 2 (Red). Finally, Radius determines the size of the zone players need to enter to trigger a LFP capture.



10 ROAD CONSTRUCTION

Select the Tile Palette on the Object Info toolbar, then choose a tile to use for your road texture. Click the Insert button to begin placing tiles, and click the 3D button to return to 3D view to place the tiles. I used a dirt texture for all of my roads. Handy hint: tiles can also be used to keep grass from displaying through the floors of buildings.



12 SAVE AND TEST

To test your map, save it into your *Joint Ops* game directory as a NPJ or NPZ file and close Nile. Start *Joint Ops*, log-on to NovaWorld and choose Host. Select your map from the list and hit the plus button to add your map to the rotation, then verify your server is set to Serve and Play. Hit the 'Start Hosting' button to start the server and enter the game. Now the real work begins: start running through your map, testing and checking all aspects.

**Not a rule
“The player must be able to refine skills”**



Dave Morris is lead designer at Elixir

Somewhere up the Amazon there's this tribe of Indians who catch fish by thrashing handfuls of kona vine in the river. This releases a narcotic that paralyses the fish.

I reckon a lady of the tribe got the idea when her husband came staggering home from the men's hut after an evening of chewing the vine with his pals. If kona makes him this floppy, she figured, what's it going to do to fishes?

So the next day she leads a bunch of sceptics down to the water, pulps a bunch of vine stalks, and maybe gets a little success. At least everyone can see the fish are torpid. The tribe spends the next month working on the details – choosing the right type and quantity of vine, finding the right threshing motion, etc.

After a few months you've got your first generation of kona bores, who will catch a basket of fish and then drone on endlessly about their plans for refining the technique. Except the interesting bit was the 'eureka' moment. All the rest is detail. If you were dramatising this for a movie you'd have it work perfectly first time, because it's the raw discovery that matters, not all the later tweaking.

Games too often dilute the fun of the breakthrough moment because we then have to spend half an hour honing our skill and timing to get it to work. By the time we accomplish what we were trying to do, we've forgotten the joy of the light bulb pinging on.

'Twas not ever thus. The old point and click adventures used to place the emphasis where it belongs. Once that spark of inspiration or reason told you what items you needed to use, it was usually plain sailing.

Obviously, nobody could reasonably want to return to the twisted, barfy, recondite puzzle-solving of old style adventure games. But when it comes to eurekas, let's not throw Archimedes out with the bathwater.

■ This design column regularly appears in game development trade journal Develop

Want to write a mod tutorial for PC GAMER? Then contact:

mark.sutherns@futurenet.co.uk



FAMILIAR GAMES, FRESH PERSPECTIVES



Awesome scenery is always best appreciated in your pants.



Bladerunner is clearly a strong influence on the design of Stark. That's the polite way of saying they've clearly ripped it off. But in a good way.



The front room of The Border House, your lodgings in Stark. Whatever its faults, this evil industrial world has a great feel for interior design.



April is an art student when her adventures in Arcadia begin. It's amazing how far a few C's at A-level will get you these days.

The Longest Journey

It's becoming a well-travelled road

Mystery is important. To know everything, to know the whole truth, is dull. There is no magic in that. Magic is not knowing, magic is wondering about what and how and where..."

Sceptical, sarcastic and sassy art student April Ryan provides the perfect eyes through which to witness this literate adventure. Aged 18, she speaks in Whedon-esque Ameriteenisms, managing to balance chirpy one-liners with pathos without ever becoming irritating. She has faults and failings, but she has these because she is real. You always forgive her – you realise that she's *important*. You trust her.

In April Ryan's life, the fantastic begins to disturb the normality of her

LONG PLAY

One adventure you should have set off on years ago



Played by
John Walker
Played For
Four years

existence, the world of dreams invading the world of rationale and science. Set 200 years in the future, this world is enough like ours for us to identify, but distant enough to stand as a metaphor. The meta-narrative tells of how, long ago, the united Earth was divided in two: Science and Magic, Stark and Arcadia. Stark's Bladerunner-inspired future version of our own world allows the effects of this satiric severance to be vividly illustrated. Wars have increased global apartheid, capitalism's punishments are more prevalent, and people get on with being people while it happens all around them. It is unavoidably our own future.

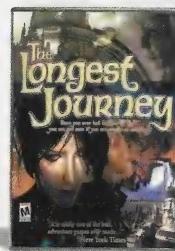
Arcadia at least possesses hope

In contrast, Arcadia refers back to many fantasy lands: simplicity bolstered by magic, seismic instability and inevitable fracture. But Arcadia at least possesses hope.

Stark's worldview is blind, eyes gouged out by its people's own hands, permits the coming destruction without even the consciousness to question it. Crucially, it

through April's dreams, through her powerful imagination, that she is drawn to 'shift' out of that world, and to learn her part in the shaping of the future.

I am strongly aware of how the ideology of this game is lodged deeply inside me. This is partly because I so strongly identify with the message I take from it, and partly because that message is so



Want to see a classic game revisited in PC GAMER? Send your links to: mark.sutherns@futurenet.co.uk

■ Price £10 ■ Publisher Empire ■ Developer Funcom ■ Requirements 166MHz CPU, 32Mb RAM ■ Multiplayer No ■ Link www.longestjourney.com

■ Community www.thedivide.org ■ Influenced by The Neverending Story, Bladerunner, Broken Sword ■ Spiritual successor Syberia, Beyond Good & Evil ■ Get it from www.longestjourney.com



...an geeky-sexy-cool. Actually, let's face it, she's sexy-cool. If you met her in real life you'd chance, kiddo.

powerfully told: imagination is how we can change the monotony of the world we've built.

The Longest Journey is an unabashed point and click adventure, with all that entails. There are always daft clicking-the-rubber-duck-on-the-clamp-and-twing-it-to-the-string puzzles. It works with these elements, not despite them. Not every voice is perfectly cast, but most are. Yes, there is swearing, but there is swearing where real people swear. And oh wow, are the conversations long. But they tell you a story like no other.

The opening quote, spoken by April's mentor when she is pestering him for answers, speaks for the game as a whole. *The Longest Journey* is epic and magnificent, but completion makes you aware that what you are playing is only a tiny fraction of the created world. But then, to know the whole truth is dull. Magic is in not knowing, magic is wondering about what and how and when.

GAMER README

First review PCG 83, 79%. Sigh.
Why now? The long-awaited sequel is on its way
Worlds created so that a story could be told within them. Breathtaking and under-rated.

Total Annihilation

Eternal war. With occasional toilet breaks, obviously



Planes glide gracefully like swallows and explode like bags of metal confetti.



The commander unit is like a King in chess. Lose him and you lose the war.

On it's 1997 release TA was often compared unfavourably to the contemporary *Tiberian Sun* and *Age of Empires*. Many pronounced it over-complex and dull; and it ended up in the bargain bin, where *Theme Hospital* continues to outperform it. Yet beneath the tacky box art, it was the smartest RTS of its generation.

A utopian galactic civilisation falls into a civil war, leaving the two almost-mindless, nigh-on-immortal robo-armies fighting endlessly over the ruins. You take control of either faction

The beauty of the game lies in the singleplayer and multiplayer skirmishes and in the variety. Straight off, the resource tree has none of the rigidity of *StarCraft*. Depending where you are, or what planet you're on, you face completely different build conditions. Energy can be obtained from wind power, wave power, etc. Metal can be created from energy,



Played by
Dan G. Lipkowitz
Played For
Six years

mined or recovered from remains. As the planets vary from lattices of easily extractable metal with high winds, to leafy woodlands with nearly no metal deposits, to frozen seascapes, cratered moons, and lava-pocked tundra, the player is poised at a battle's outset with very little idea of what resource limits he's going to face and hence what tech-tree he'll have to employ.

The maps can be huge, with epic battles taking hours, and players slowly searching each other out, reeling backwards and forwards as dummy bases are crushed. Moreover, unlike almost all modern RTSSes, it's in proper 3D; you can't rotate the camera, but hills block shots, vehicles have trouble with bumpy terrain, and air and sea fleets add a fifth dimension (we're counting time-space as one, Hawking).

There are problems. Players with screens capable of large resolutions can see more of the battlefield. The single-player campaign, despite its high concept, can be tough and tedious. Yet the game lasts forever, the skirmish mode bears endless replay, and the multiplayer is a divine arena of feigns, forays, attack and counterattack. Chuck in great music, loads of missions, more mods than *Quadrophenia*, and you have an unmatched tactical simulation.



A grotesque metal planet, riddled with grates to lose your charge down.

PCGAMER README

First review PCG 4B, 94%
Why now? Sci-Fi RTS games are in the doldrums
The most open, expandable and deceptive strategy game of all time. Rewards long play.



THE STORIES THAT MAKE US GLAD WE'RE GAMERS



OVERCLOCKING

6GHz PC

Shopping list: liquid nitrogen, CPU, gloves

Just how far can you over-clock a retail processor? Very, very far, it appears. A group of dedicated hardware obsessives have broken the magic 6GHz barrier, souping up a standard P4 560 3.6GHz to an astonishing half-dozen GHz. Reaching such incredible speeds required a serious cooling set-up. The PC mainboard was separated from the case, and laid out flat. Extraneous hardware was discarded, and a heavy sealed copper pipe was moulded to the heatsink. With the PC turned on, clockspeeds were gradually increased using software overclocking tools, while liquid nitrogen (stored at a slightly frigid -196 degrees Centigrade) was poured into

the tubing. As the chip's clockspeed was increased, the enormous quantities of heat generated were siphoned away by the ridiculous cooling set-up. As Macci, the speed-freak responsible for this moment of hardware madness explains, the overclocked PC was "as stable as your mate after a bar evening at 4am." That made getting the ultimate proof, a screenshot of the Windows desktop with the CPU speed displayed in a window, a time-consuming process. Would the system stay stable long enough for them to save the grab to the hard-drive?

Why bother going to such lengths? Because Moore's Law, that states processor power will double every eighteen months, is there to be broken.

www.akiba-pc.com

MEMORIAL

CAPES OFF



The death of Superman star Christopher Reeve was marked with an in-game tribute by the inhabitants of Paragon City. Hundreds of players from the crime-fighting MMO *City of Heroes* gathered in Atlas Square to perform a synchronised salute.

'The Original Hero' eulogised: "I think that as people who play in a superhero-based game, we should take a moment to respect the man who 'breathed life' into the greatest superhero of all. Christopher Reeve made Superman his character, and carried the impact the character made on him into his real life. He fought on after his accident for the same things Superman would have liked anyone to fight for. As such, I think he was a true superhero for truth, justice and the American way."

What's happening in your gaming world?
Tell us your tales of gaming wonder...
mark.sutherns@futurenet.co.uk

HIGH ROLLERS

Casino openings

The virtual gambling lobby

When the value of chips is down, what do you do? One solution is to encourage players to throw their cash away. Literally. The latest trend in MMO design is to introduce 'money-sinks'. Economic safety valves that enable surplus credits to be siphoned out of the system, slowing the rate of 'MUDflation'.

MMOs face a simple but devastating problem: rampant inflation that renders the game meaningless. Players inadvertently devalue the worth of the goods they play for because questing automatically generates new wealth, in the form of items and currency, regardless of demand. 100 gold pieces are precious when there's only 200 gold in the entire world, but virtually worthless when the economy is awash with 200 trillion gold.

The team behind *Galaxies* and *Ultima Online* are

working on ways to reduce the money supply and slow down the inflationary pressure. Casinos and lotteries are the obvious choice – cheap thrills for random prizes and the odds stacked in favour of the house. Individuals will be able to win big, but as always, these institutions will suck in far more than they pay out. Who needs Vegas? Or Blackpool?

www.starwarsgalaxies.com



"This is not the card you're looking for."

GOBLIN SUIT

Fan Faire

EverQuest players celebrate

New Orleans is a city used to partying people, but nothing could have prepared it for the latest *EverQuest* Fan Faire. 3,000 self-confessed Norrathians descended upon the sultry city of whisky and jazz for the latest in a semi-regular series of shindigs involving auctions of rare game-related stuff, costume competitions, panel discussions and, of course, playing the game itself. Most of all, though, hardcore *EverQuesters* use these get-togethers as a chance to meet other players, natter about their experiences and immerse themselves in the game's thriving culture.

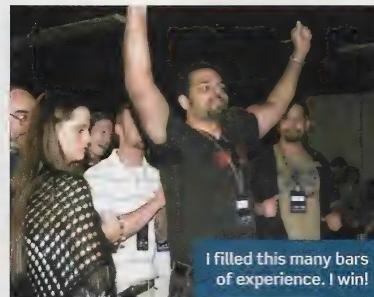


Shirt of +3 loudness.



The New Orleans Faire took place just days before the release of *EverQuest II*, so there was a special buzz in the orc-scented air. Attendees were able to play the beta to their hearts' content on a massive network, but the highlight of the weekend was the 'Ultimate Elimination Challenge'. Competition winners from around the world were tasked with accruing the most experience points in 24 hours (it was originally 48, but presumably there were health concerns). Do you think you'd pulled a gaming marathon by playing *Counter-Strike* until 4am? Think again.

■ <http://everquest.station.sony.com/fanfaire>



I filled this many bars of experience. I win!

MAO GAMES

RED OF DEAD



Games are corrupting modern youth. That's the view of the Chinese government, reacting to imported titles currently flooding into their country. China has a massive LAN cafe culture, where millions of teenage gamers spend the majority of their spare time playing imported MMOs from Korea and Japan. To supply that fanatical Chinese gaming community, Chinese state media has reported that the government is to invest over \$240 million dollars in new titles, specifically dealing with Chinese culture, history and issues. Over 50 businesses are already involved in the project, to produce over 100 'high-quality' games. Violence, corruption and bad language are out. Games based around National heroes, like Lei Fang who worked himself to death for the good of the Communist cause, are in. This isn't the first time the Chinese government have attempted to control the influence of gaming. *Project IGI 2* was banned from sale in the country for portraying the Chinese government as corrupt and dangerous, while *Command & Conquer: Generals* was removed from sale for including a mission where terrorists fired missiles at Beijing.



WHY I LOVE...

› Game Rome: Total War › Gamer Tony Ellis › Love affair Obsessively fighting the same battles

FIGHTING THE SAME BATTLE TWICE

Rome if you want to, Rome around the world

I quickly learned the basic rule that all good conquerors learn: Choose Your Battles. Ensure you always have superior numbers or the strategic advantage when you fight, and preferably both. Do this, and your victory will be almost certain.

And then one fateful day I looked at the stats box at the end of a battle, and realised that almost half the enemy had fled unscathed. I'd won, but my hero, Alexander the Great, would hardly be impressed. What kind of a military genius was I? I reloaded my last save and fought the battle again, trying a different strategy. This time I massacred them.

After that, I was hooked. If the stats box said I had killed an unexciting number of the enemy, or if my own losses were high enough to rankle, back I went and played that battle again. And again. Each time I tried something different. Sending my cavalry in earlier. Sending them in later. Splitting my archers and attacking from two different sides at once. The more resounding my victory, the more I wanted to go back and see if I could squeeze just a few more points out of it.

Everyone else I know who's playing *Rome* is now far ahead of me, but I don't care. I'm conquering the known world and I'm conquering it brilliantly. My battles are elegant machines of death, beautiful to watch but even more intoxicating to orchestrate. Let the unimaginative press the Auto-Resolve button: *Rome* was designed to be a fantastically cinematic battle simulator, and that's precisely what I'm using it for.



1 THE ROUT WAY TO DO IT

As soon as I send the massed ranks of my army in their general direction, these outnumbered Gauls rout. Hurrah! Another heroic victory! Except, of course, that because most of them rout right off the battlefield before I can get near them, I will simply have to fight them again some other day. Hmm.



2 THE RIGHT WAY TO DO IT

Reload. The same battle. But this time I fall back, and the undisciplined Gauls pursue. By the time they realise their mistake, they're too far down the throat of my trap to escape. Obelix lies dead. Dogmatix whimpers by his side. 496 of Asterix's merry chums will never bother the House of Julii again.



BE MY PADAWAN

The Knight School

"You will find only what you bring in"

Once again it's my turn to stand in front of the class and show them what I've learned. The task is to cartwheel out of danger: it's better than a backflip, which leaves your legs open for ownage. I give it a go, and end up like a helicopter in distress. I'm uncomfortably aware that I'm the only student who's failed to pull it off. It happens again. And again. And again. I turn to the instructor, Virtue, and suggest it might be better for me to try it later. Just as he tells me that's fine, I give it one final go. It works. Everyone cheers. I make my way back to the others, congratulations popping out of the chat channel as I go.

CULTURE CLASS ACT

I'm attending class at The Jedi Academy (www.thejediacademy.net), a unique collection of gamers with a remarkable mission statement.

They've taken the multiplayer component of *Jedi Knight* and *Jedi Academy* and built a social matrix. Academy leader and founder Chris 'MassaDoobie' DuBois puts it best: "The Academy is a place that serves two purposes. The first and most obvious is teaching people how to play the *Jedi Knight* games. We strive to take normal public server players, teach them hints, tips, tricks, have them practise in a friendly environment, and make it so they can go on any server and have success. The second is as a place of respect



ON THE DISC Read Craig's interviews with both the founder and the longest-serving member of the Academy > Resources

that doesn't really exist anywhere else on the internet. The Academy was started to allow people to get away from the complete jerks that dominate most servers, the people who kill you while you're typing, constantly talk trash, and never allow a new player to develop because he just gets 'owned' all the time. In the Academy, we don't tolerate abuse of others and we preach above all respect amongst our members. That's why we have so many real-life friendships form out of the Academy. Our members treat others as humans, not as n00bs waiting to be fragged."

It's to experience this somewhat unique take on multiplayer gaming that I'm attending the class: Virtue's 'Basic Medium Stance Strategy'. I signed up to the Academy, and joined the roster. Virtue's classes are some of the most popular the Academy offers, and with good reason: he's an excellent teacher. By the end of the evening I'm convinced that if he had got hold of Luke,

there would be no trilogy: Luke would have lamped Vader before the end of *The Empire Strikes Back*. We begin with a dozen or so students in the Ceremonial Hall, our teacher at the front, typing instructions into the chat channel.

"Planning a lesson can be somewhat difficult," he later told me. "It is very rare that a class will be full of students who are all at the same skill level, so everyone is different. I have to make sure that I cater for everyone. Before I start, I'll prepare my basic teachings and exercises for the people who are new to my class, so that they can learn the basics while I prepare an exercise for the more advanced students to do, to help hone what they have already learned. Usually, I can bring everyone together midway through the class and teach them as a whole again."

Under Virtue I learn basic Yellow Stance strategy, the middle combat stance of *Jedi Academy*. There are a





RESPECT!

number of exercises to go through. He describes each, demonstrates it then pairs the attendees off to practise. My sparring partner, the brilliantly helpful Squibit, helps me as I fail to grasp the simplest concepts. After some prompting and helpful encouragement from both him, Virtue and Virtue's assistant for the evening Tido, I slowly begin to grasp the fundamentals.

In the company of the trainers, I felt no fear about asking questions. They're there to assist.

There is something almost perverse about an online community designed to be accommodating and helpful. The training focus is all about having fun and being part of a larger community. You just pop in when you can, take part and do your best. As a result, unlike a grinding MMORPG the Academy fits in and around most ordinary human lifestyles.

But there are rewards for taking the training seriously. Newer students,

"We don't tolerate abuse of others"

can, if they wish, become Padawans of staff members of the site. They gain one-on-one personal training and guidance, and the chance to prove themselves if they want to be promoted. Proving yourself is a difficult task, involving a number of challenges. You have an online

demonstration of your skills to perform, and a written exam. The Jedi Council also take into account how you interact with other students. Only when you pass scrutiny do you

become a Trainer.

The Jedi Academy is more than a bunch of people swinging sabers. It's almost a support group of gamers, working out their Jedi fantasies in a unique environment. The buzzing forums, friendly IRC channel and helpful classes are all an achievement like no other, making their large collective an experience worth buying the game for.

CRAIG PEARSON

REMEMBER

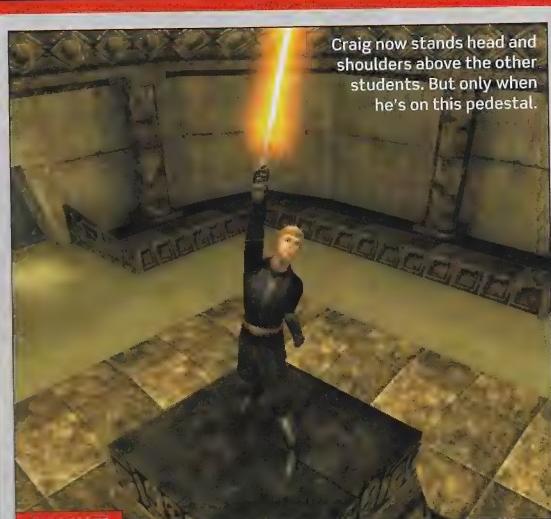
Vladarion's Memorial

Part of the official map is given up to a memorial for Dennis 'Vladarion' Allen. Dennis died on Boxing Day 2003, following a horrific car accident. The academy have chosen to use a large area of their map to remember him. The memorial, a burning flame on a stone altar, set within a peaceful grove, is considered a sacred area to the members. It's the most telling example of the remarkable sense of community the Jedi Academy has.

Virtue explains its presence: "Dennis 'Vladarion' Allen was probably one of the nicest and

most respectful people you are ever likely to meet, both online and offline. He was an inspiration to everyone and was the epitome of what we classed a 'Model Student'. Sadly, Vladarion was taken away from us last year, so the first thing that obviously sprung into our minds was to build something into the map to honour him. No matter how many maps I build for the academy, the memorial will always be there."

To read more about 'Vlad', visit the Academy database for a detailed article: www.thejediacademy.net/articles_detail_page.php?f_id=5



What I learned Jedi Master Virtue's Top Tips

TIP



HOW TO BE A JEDI

"No matter what game you play, your performance is 40% frame of mind. You will be at your best if you are happy, calm, chilled out. Getting frustrated or angry will result in your co-ordination, focus and control suffering. So, just like a true Jedi, be mindful of your feelings, they do you credit, but they can be made to benefit your opponent."

"The most beneficial swings that you can do are side swings (stroke left/right + attack). They cover the most area and provide the most offence and defence. These moves can be devastating when chained into what is commonly called a 'Scissor' combo. Swings also provide you with decent defence, as your Lightsaber arcs around your body."

"An attack should be aimed so that you are attacking your opponent's mid/upper torso area. This takes full advantage of the range of your Lightsaber; torso attacks cause high damage and, if you knock your opponent's Lightsaber back, their head will be lowered, enabling you to follow up with head attacks."

"It is very important that you know the range of your Lightsaber. You can practice this on a wall, see how far away from the wall you can get while still marking it with your Lightsaber when you swing. This will enable you to make attacks at a distance where you can most safely evade or fend off oncoming attacks from your opponent."

"This final tip has many benefits. Always, ALWAYS keep your opponent centred in front of you, no matter how far away you think they are. The middle of your swing is the most powerful point, that has the strongest offence and defence potential. If you combine this with the other tips and master it, you will be a fearsome opponent."



ÜBER-EVENT

Welcome to Paragon City...

A city living on the edge of constant apocalypse

BY KIERON GILL

Only one thing can secure the city
a future against impossible odds...

...its heroes!



At Hero One's tomb, via the shops to buy and sell enhancements.

I swear Hero One's tomb was in Perez Park when I was defending it.

Probably part of some cosmic machinations by the forces of Evil, Wych. Get a move on.

But inside...

It's the Lost.

Right - stay calm. Everyone understand the plan?

The Plan:

Get them!

But The Lost can Get Them too...

Crikey. What a rotter.

Let's back-face-punch him with my blast-o-hand.

More Get Them!

BLAM

But the heroes Get Them back SOME MORE.

ZAP

No more Get Them!

Hero One's tomb is saved!

I didn't even have time to make my terribly clever Get Lost joke.

Back at City Hall.

Behold the mighty defender of Hero One's dignity!

Oh my. You are a true hero and clearly very manly. Please, have a cape, sir.

A quick trip to Paragon City's famous 'Icon' Tailor's...

One supercape with all the trimming, velvet panelling... actually, silk, no... Oh, I just don't know. What do you think?

Wow. Nice cape. I can't discuss my secret identities. You must understand.

Thanks. But who are you and where's Baka Gaijin?

That's so neat. If only there was a way for me to prove my heroism too.

PARAGON CITY HALL

Oh no! The Lost are desecrating Hero One's monument again. That's the three-hundredth and seventy-fourth time today. Will they never learn?

Thing is, I much prefer wearing leathers anyway.

NEXT MONTH: The heroes face their greatest challenge yet, in "What level do I have to be to get those really cool sparkly eyes?" Stay tuned, true believer.



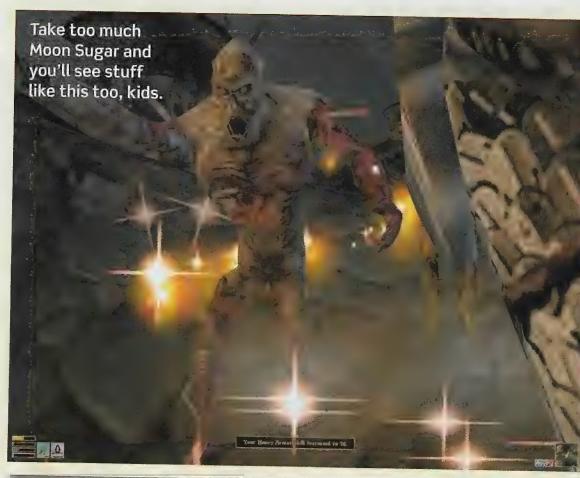
“Lord, all these rings...”

A tale of jewellery, sewer outlets and unheard-of godlike powers

My dealer is a cat. Today I'm dealing to him, though, because I need the money and I don't need the Moon Sugar. Moon Sugar's an illegal mind-altering psychedelic, and most respectable folk – including the enchanter I'm off to see – won't have anything to do with you if they find you in possession. But my dodgy friend is a Kahjiit, a cat-person, and they have a weakness for the sugar.

The native Dark Elves of *Morrowind* have used the Kahjiit and other 'beast races' as slaves for centuries, but the liberal human Empire's recent unwelcome presence has forced all but the richest and most right-wing of the Dark Elf families to give up their erstwhile servants. A submissive mindset, however, and a soft spot for controlled substances, have kept most of them from getting anywhere in a respectable profession.

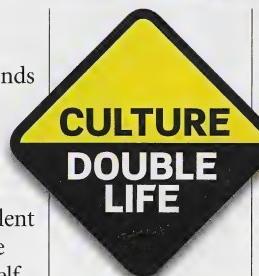
Today this works well for me. My cat friend takes all he can afford. Now I have everything I'll need to give the enchanter: a decent ring, a powerful soul trapped in a soul-gem, and an obscene amount of money. The ring is plain and easy to come by, but the soul was harder work – the strongest ones come from the most dangerous creatures, and can only be contained by the best soul-gems. For mine, I went straight to a Goddess – Azura. She and



the chaos God Sheogorath had an existential bet on whether solitude leads to inner harmony or simply sends you mad. They'd chosen a hermit woman to test the matter, but Sheogorath surrounded her hut with crazy monsters to make her think she was imagining things. Violent intervention on my part ensured the woman never saw the beasts or myself and Azura won the bet. She rewarded me with her Star – a soul-gem capable of trapping anything, including a God.

A Golden Saint would do for me. I've often encountered them in the grazelands, a beautiful region to the north-east of the country with gently undulating hills, pretty shrubs and misty sunrises. I roamed those hills until I found one, cast the soul-trap spell on her eerily impassive face, then hacked her to death to 'extract' what I needed.

I could use this soul to imbue my ring with any of the spells I know, but I have a very specific idea and I explain it to the enchanter. He asks what I want to call it. I hadn't thought of this. My current jewellery – all custom enchanted – is named to a theme: Slick (fast swimming), Click (opens any lock), Tick (leeches an enemy's life-force), Quick (speeds me up) and Trick (makes people like me). The ring I want to make will only have a modest healing spell, but in constant effect –



By Cuba/Tom Francis
Occupation Drug-dealer, swordsman and messiah – currently moonlighting as a werewolf.

ON THE DVD All the essential *Morrowind* plugins and mods you need to start your own cat-drugging career > Mods

rendering me almost impossible to kill. I call it Brick.

Brick works; I am unstoppable. The elite religious guard of the nation's capital city, the Ordinators, have long had a warrant for my death because I once wore their sacred armour for a joke. But now their barbed ceremonial maces cause mere scratches that mend before they can swing again.

Soon, though, something odd starts to happen. My fifth guard is on his knees, and although his expressionless gold mask makes it hard to imagine a look of fear, I almost want to spare him. As he crashes to the floor, I look around at the bodies surrounding me and I just feel empty. Killing them like this, when sorcery makes the fight a sick joke, is obscene.

Brick is now lying somewhere on a riverbed near a sewage outlet deep below the surface of the waterways that separate Vivec's floating markets. Next to it is Azura's Star – worth more than every other item in the nation put together – and the rest of my precious and devastatingly powerful trinkets. Now I wear only my old robe and carry a mundane katana.

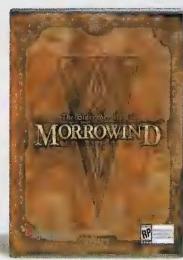
I saved the world in my first year in *Morrowind*. Since then I've built towns, led a double-life as a werewolf, acted in a play, killed Gods and become like one myself. Now I just help people out, get rid of the bad guys, walk the land. I live with a cat-woman: a thief, but a guild-sanctioned one – Moon Sugar-free to my knowledge. I might swim the sewers of Vivec one day and bring back Azura's Star for the mantelpiece, but I'll leave Brick where it is. The chances of a fisherman finding it are minimal, and I don't need a reminder that there's more to life than omnipotence.

PCGAMER README

Type	Single-player RPG
Publisher	Ubisoft
Link	www.morrowind.com
Community	www.rpgplanet.com/morrowind

THE STORY SO FAR

Morrowind is a first-person RPG in which you play a prisoner exiled to a vast, gorgeous, freely explorable island nation. It's come a long way since it was released two years ago. The first expansion pack brought *Morrowind*'s vast capital city to life, while the second let you live a secret nocturnal existence as a werewolf in the snowy highlands of Solstheim. Meanwhile the mod-count has swollen to a staggering 3,500, including eight official mods that add new armour, weapons and quests. Lastly, the patches have made the game run much faster, and modern machines are finally equipped to cope with its gorgeous vistas.



START-UP

1 Install *Morrowind*. Create a character with a stupid name, ie, 'Ujerk'. Pick magic skills.

2 Realise you don't understand the magic system and have no hope of progressing.

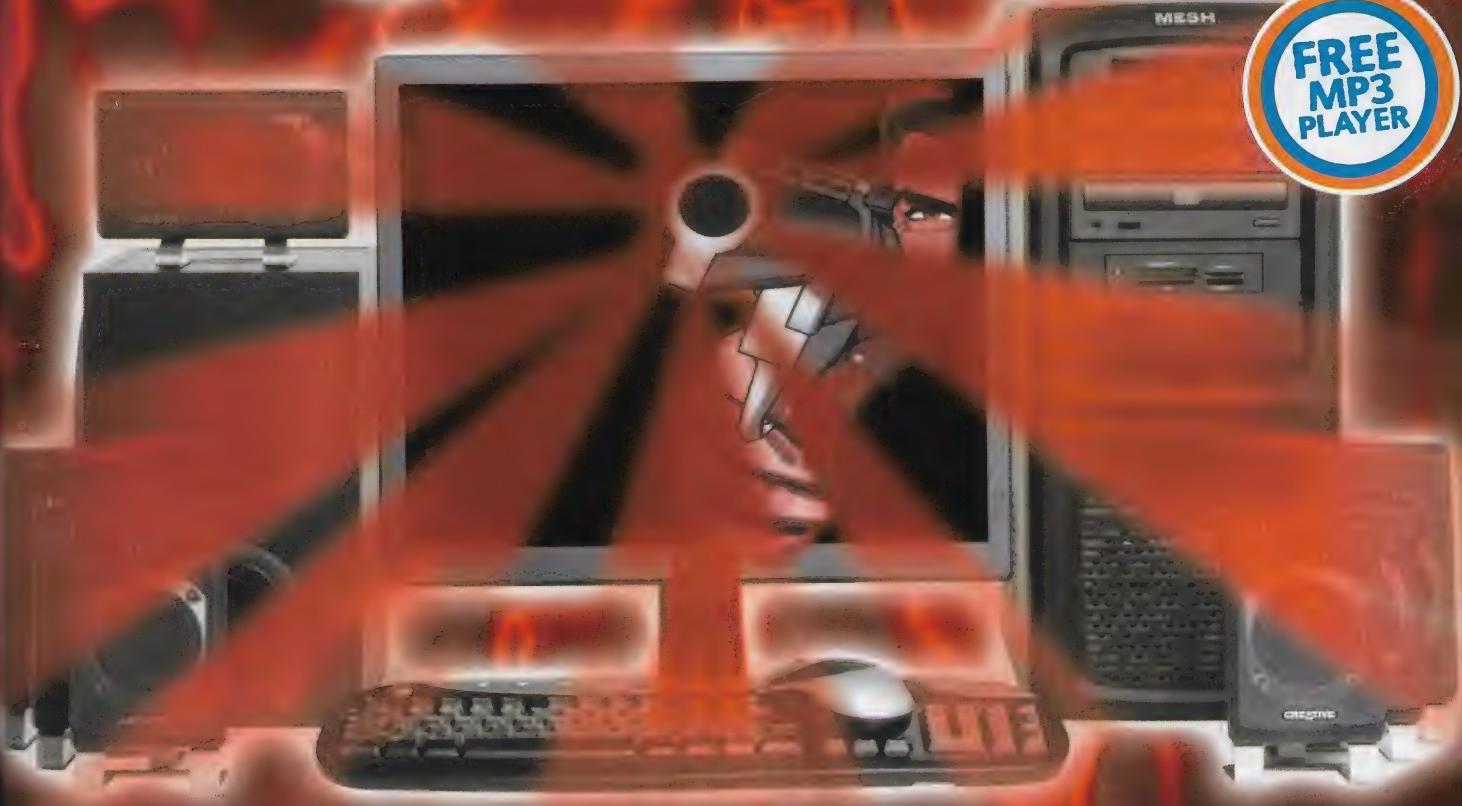
3 Create a character with combat or stealth skills. You'll be ready for magic in a month.

4 Get the latest patch and essential plugins from this month's DVD and enable them all.



The ONLY Windows® - compatible 64-bit PC Processor

Awesome gaming



MESH X-TREME 9-FX55 PLATINUM

The X-TREME Leading Edge in Gaming PCs

- AMD Athlon™ 64 FX 55 Processor with HyperTransport™ Technology
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- ASUS A8V-Deluxe Mainboard, 2000MHz System Bus, GB LAN, IEEE 1394, SATA (939 PIN)
- 1GB DDR 400 Memory (2x 512MB)
- 600GB Serial ATA Ultra Fast HDD (2x 300GB, 16MB buffer)
- 256MB NVIDIA GeForce FX 6800GT with TV out & DVI
- 19" TFT Analogue/Digital DVI Flat Panel Monitor
- Sony Multi-Format 16x Dual Layer DVD Writer**
- Creative Labs Sound Blaster Audigy Platinum 2 EXT ZS Pro
- Creative Labs Inspire 7.1 - T7900 Speakers + Subwoofer
- ASUS WiFi 54Mbps IEEE 802.11g PCI Card
- Logitech Cordless Desktop Keyboard and Optical Mouse
- Software: Pinnacle Instant CD/DVD Player and Studio 9 SE
- 3 Year Back-to-Base Warranty (see terms)
- Midi case (475W PSU) plus additional features >>

£2199 INC. VAT **£1871.49** EX. VAT



PLUS...

- >> Creative® MuVo TX
128MB USB storage for data or audio
- >> Up to 2/4 hours of music MP3s with 15 hours continuous playback
- >> Voice recording
- >> Blue backlit display
- >> Stereo earphones

- >> X-TREME Games Bundle
Bundle includes Nostromo Speedpad and 3 quality games
- >> Championship Manager Season 03/04
- >> Lock On Air Combat Simulation
- >> XIII

- >> new Microsoft® Works 8
Includes Dictionary, PowerPoint Viewer, Word Processor, Spreadsheet, Database, Calendar, e-mail & internet tools
- PLUS FREE 60 Day Microsoft Office Trial

The benefits of choosing an AMD Athlon™ 64 based PC are extensive...

>> **Featuring Cool 'n' Quiet™ technology.** For a quieter PC that conserves energy.

>> **Safer surfing with enhanced virus protection.** Enabled by Microsoft Windows SP2.

>> **HyperTransport™ Technology.** Allows you to multi-task efficiently by improving communication flow inside your PC.

>> **Future Compatibility.** ONLY AMD Athlon™ 64 based PCs offer 32 and 64-bit compatibility.

08700 46 47 47

email: sales@meshcomputers.com

www.meshcomputers.com

MESH House, 1 Oxtgate Centre, Oxtgate Lane, London NW2 7JA

MESH
computers plc



WORLD OF E-SPORTS



Team USA wins gold at WCG

USA defeat Denmark in thrilling cybergames finale

MATCH REPORT

USA vs Denmark

COUNTER-STRIKE

World Cyber Games

Sunday October 10, 2004

Player to watch: Rambo (USA)

Over 600 players from 64 countries met in San Francisco for the 4th annual World Cyber Games. This is the first year the festival has been held outside of South Korea, but with over \$400,000 in prize money competition was just as intense.

The *Counter-Strike: CZ* final was contested by Team3D of USA (last year's Silver medallists) and The Titans (ESWC Danish winners). The best-of-three-maps final began on *de_train*, where the USA terrorist dominated with a series of precise grenade-aided attacks. Denmark struggled to defend



ON THE DVD Witness the highs, the lows and the tension of this thrilling match to see how the pros do it > Movies

either bombsite or secure the bombsites and lost 4-13.

Denmark's fight began on the second map, *de_cobble*. The Danes held choke points for each bombsite and outsmarted USA's 'dummies'. The Titans won the half 11-1, and required just two wins as counter-terrorists to take the final into a third

SPORTS

Action from the final of the World Cyber Games

map. But the USA's aim and grenade timings thwarted Denmark's attacks. The second half finished 11-1 forcing the game into overtime twice. The teams were still tied until the final round when Moto's 1v4 performance won it for the Americans.

CLAN PROFILE

GOING DOWN

Name	Team3D
Players	5
Country	USA
Games	Counter-Strike
Wins	2nd WCG 2003, 1st WCG 2004
Sponsors	nVidia, Compaq, Sennheiser, Subway, Icemat



TROUBLE AT THE TOP

Shaky performances from Team3D over the past year led to a decline in their world standing. Despite having the best financial support of any US side they've struggled to stay in the top 5. But they still snatched gold at the Cybergames and will try to repeat the feat at the CPL Championships.

Fatal1ty upset

Champ runs smack into Great Wall

Following undefeated performances in both Europe and America, Fatal1ty suffered a shock defeat at the ABIT Great Wall Shootout. The Quakecon *Doom 3* champ was beaten 26-5 by widely respected Chinese duellist, Meng 'Rocketboy' Yang.

The 21-year-old student pocketed \$1,000,000 RMB (£68,500) and is to star at all future gaming exhibitions in the region. Meng Yang was also snapped up by ABIT on a contract to promote, amusingly enough, their Fatal1ty range of gaming hardware.

Fatal1ty's ABIT shootouts have otherwise proved to be extremely successful in recent months, with the world's most famous gamer conquering all comers at gaming exhibitions worldwide, including the recent GameStars LIVE in the UK. Fatal1ty can next be seen in Seoul and Milan.

TOURNAMENT

ABIT Shootout

DOOM 3
ABIT Great Wall Shootout
Monday October 18, 2004
Beijing, China

BEATEN!



TAG

TEAM AMD GAMER

PC GAMER'S HOME CLAN

TAG at WCG

Zaccubus narrowly misses out on Cyber playoffs

MATCH REPORT

Zaccubus vs Killu**UNREAL TOURNAMENT**

World Cyber Games

Friday October 8, 2004

Bill Graham Auditorium, San Francisco

David 'Zaccubus' Treacy was flown out to San Francisco this month in a bid to make a name for himself at the World Cyber Games. His expenses-paid trip follows an impressive performance at the UK qualifiers, emerging as the nation's leading UT2004 dueller.

Things began well for Zaccubus, defeating Bulgaria's Sektor 10-5 in the first group stages before playing Killu from the German side rK on Ironic. Killu took control of the game quickly by claiming the early armour amps. Zaccubus then adopted hit-and-run tactics, attempting to peck away at his armour. Unfortunately for the UK

ON THE DVD Witness Zaccubus' World Games debut by watching this close battle for yourself > Movies

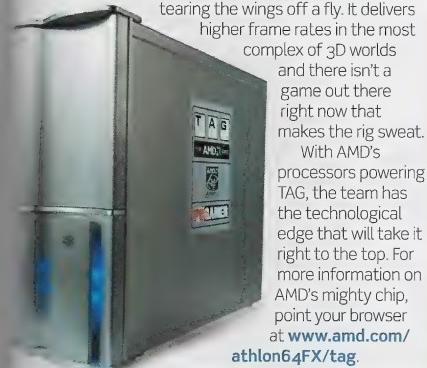
THE TAG RIG



TAG is the amalgam of two of the biggest names in gaming brought together by AMD's creation of the most powerful processor this side of 2001's monolith. The Athlon 64 FX-51 processor sits in the heart of TAG's PCs, setting the team ahead of the game.

The Athlon's 64-bit architecture delivers both performance and power with the ease of a gorilla tearing the wings off a fly. It delivers higher frame rates in the most complex of 3D worlds and there isn't a game out there right now that makes the rig sweat.

With AMD's processors powering TAG, the team has the technological edge that will take it right to the top. For more information on AMD's mighty chip, point your browser at www.amd.com/ athlon64FX/tag.



newcomer, Killu maintained control and gained a 3-0 lead.

Zaccubus kept up the pressure however, and was rewarded in the last eight minutes with a kill that turned the tide in his favour. Now in control, Zaccubus quickly pulled the scores level leading to an intense final five minutes. With two minutes to go a much wounded Killu pulled a frag ahead, but had to

STATESIDE
TAG are preparing for the CPL Winter 2004 World Championships, the UT team will look to repeat their success in the Unreal Tournament Champions League.

The TAG Academy

Week in the life of a pro



Name Marty Rome
TAG Role WC3 Player

Training for the world cyber games takes a lot of dedication. For this event I put all my spare time into playing Warcraft online on the Europe server to play some of the top players in the world. You need to spend a lot of time practising online, this would normally consist of at least five hours a day, two or three weeks prior to the event. It is important to watch a lot of demos/replays of players going to the same competition as you, so you can get an early advantage knowing their strategies and tactics.

When you lose a game you need to watch the demo/replay to figure out what you did wrong. This also helps you to spot your own weaknesses so you can work on them. This is very important, as if any player picks out your weaknesses from one of your replays they can then exploit them against you.

Playing hours per week	30
Matches per week	25
Number of Heroes slain per week	123
Win ratio	7:1

The Pro Tips Zone



WARCRAFT 3

Controlling your units

Controlling your units makes the difference between winning and losing a game in Warcraft. Check your units' health and move near-death units out of battle, and your enemy won't get any experience from killing them. Conversely, if you check your enemy's units' health, you can kill them and gain the experience. Managing both these tricks together can be hard and takes a lot of practice. Hold down the 'ALT' key to bring up all of your units' health points and your enemy's, making it easier to pick out injured units. Surrounding your enemy's units is also important as this can change the fate of a game. Use the move key to direct your army around an enemy unit then close in on it.

Hot keys are an important issue in the game. Learning all the hot keys for building units, for using spells and for using items can save precious time in battle, and can mean the difference between losing or saving your hero. To improve your game you should learn all the hot keys for moving, attacking, using items, using spells and building structures: doing these with the mouse is very time consuming.

Hot keys can also assist you in grouping your units in different categories of Melee Attack, Ranged attack, Magic attack and Siege attack, and tying these to the numeric keypad keys. You can quickly select the different groups, matching them against the right opponents.



WARCRAFT 3

Mastering shortcuts

Want your clan or tourney in GAMER?
Then contact our E-Sport correspondent:

richard@teamamdgamer.net

UBISOFT ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS
A SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT PRODUCTION



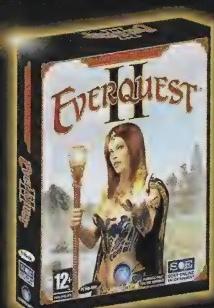
THE CREATORS OF THE WORLD'S MOST SUCCESSFUL
ONLINE GAME EXPERIENCED BY MILLIONS

ACTUAL SCREENSHOT

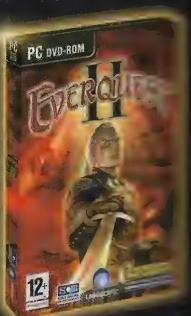


INVITE YOU TO JOIN THE ULTIMATE QUEST

LIMITED EDITION



STANDARD EDITION



includes cloth map
and in-game freebies



www.btyahoo.com/ubisoft

AVAILABLE NOVEMBER 2004

© 2004 Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. EverQuest is a registered trademark and Where Adventure Comes Alive is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. SOE and the SOE logo are registered trademarks of Sony Online Entertainment Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries.
All other trademarks or trade names are properties of their respective owners. All rights reserved.





EverQuest®

WHERE ADVENTURE
COMES ALIVE™



SONY ONLINE
ENTERTAINMENT

visit EverQuest2.com for more details



UBISOFT™

EXPERT ADVICE ON GAMING LAPTOPS

How do portable gaming rigs compare with desktop systems?

BY MIKE ABOLINS

Eighteen months ago you would have been laughed out of town for even considering the question. Even the most powerful of laptops, the hefty 'desktop replacement' models that came with large displays, desktop processors, stacks of RAM and capacious hard drives, were unable of running any game at a level of detail beyond the Cro-Magnon. But the truth is that laptop technology has come on leaps and bounds since the bad old days. Mobile graphics processors ('mobility' as it refers to a laptop, rather than a phone, being the buzzword in IT circles) from nVidia and ATI are now only a couple of steps behind those found on the latest AGP cards, while mobile processors are providing more performance on less power. Lithium-ion batteries are a standard feature, providing up to three hours' life for everyday office work and even topping the one hour mark when tasked with such a strenuous activity as running a game.

If you're wondering why laptop manufacturers simply don't shoehorn the same

 **ON THE DISC** Find our guide to understanding your PC in The PC GAMER PC Companion > Resources

top-of-the-range processors or Radeon X800 graphics cards found in their high-performance desktop systems into their portable PCs, there are two matters stopping them: heat and power consumption. Heat, of course, is a problem common to anyone building a performance system, regardless of whether it's

portable or not. But whereas there's room for a heat sink the size of a brick in your desktop case, there isn't in a laptop. You'll still find the same heat

sink/cooling fan setup but it'll be on a far smaller scale. As a result, the processor and graphics card in a laptop must run cooler, usually with a slightly lower clock speed and a marginal decrease in performance. The bottom line for gamers: the latest games are always going to look better on the latest desktop PC, not the latest laptop.

desktop PC,

not the latest laptop.

What should you look for in a gaming laptop?



TOUCH PAD
A major disadvantage with a laptop is the lack of a proper mouse, so invest in a USB model to replace the touchpad.

SYSTEMS README

> WHY AM I HERE? How does the thought of playing *Half-Life 2* or *Rome: Total War* absolutely anywhere grab you?

> RISK FACTOR? Pick a duffer and you stand to lose this much...

 Small change
 Round of drinks
 PC game
 Flight to Paris
 Tailor-made suit
 Bar of gold

> IS IT EASY? Follow our advice and it'll be no more tricky than...

 Stomping slugs
 Picking up a rabbit
 Training a dog
 Herding cats
 Juggling fish
 Talking to animals

> SELL IT TO ME... The term 'gaming laptop' is no longer an oxymoron, so find out how to bag yourself a mobile monster.

Another concern close to a gamer's heart is that of power consumption, because there's a limited supply from the laptop's battery. Even though you may rarely use your laptop without it being connected to mains power, its battery should still last longer than the time it takes to load the next map in *UT2004*; you'll never know when you'll want to fire up *FIFA* in a café or on a train, for instance. Battery issues have resulted in processors and laptop

components that use far less voltage than their desktop cousins. In a round-about fashion, the fact that less cooling is required also helps, because the battery-draining fans don't need to be blowing full-time.

So what should you look for if you're thinking about buying a gaming laptop? You should first ask yourself whether you need your gaming PC to be portable at all. There's no getting around it: a high-performance laptop

cannot yet match a high-performance desktop system in terms of sheer computing power. It will come mighty close, but if all you care about is flawless anisotropic filtering while maintaining inflationary frame rates on a screen the size of a mini-van, you'll yearn for more power than a laptop can provide. Just ponder on it for a minute or two; if your laptop's unlikely to ever leave its desk you'll be wasting your money buying one. Portability is a

PCGAMER DICTIONARY THE OED OF GAMING

PCMCIA An expansion card interface that is exclusive to laptops; the cards receive their power from the laptop itself.

Centrino An Intel brand that refers to a wireless-ready laptop with Pentium M processor.

Notebook An alternative to the word 'laptop' for marketing people; it bears no reference to form factor or specification.

Desktop Replacement A heavy, feature-packed laptop that's not suited to life away from a desk or a mains socket.

Ultra-portable Less powerful than a desktop replacement but considerably thinner and lighter to carry around.

Lithium-ion The best variety of battery available for laptops, often abbreviated to Li-on.

SCREEN

Most laptops have a 4:3 aspect ratio screen but 16:9 models are becoming more popular for widescreen gaming and movies.

HINGE

When the laptop's in a bag, pack it so the hinge is at the bottom to reduce the stresses placed upon it by the screen and prevent damage.

PCMCIA

The PCMCIA (often just called "PC card") slot is for expansion cards like wireless network adapters. Creative has a PCMCIA sound card in the works.

FEET

Some laptops feature feet to lift up the rear; use them to improve the airflow underneath and keep the laptop cooler.

very expensive optional extra when you're shopping for a PC and it's one that you must be certain that you want.

However, if the idea of upping sticks and taking your PC to a LAN party, friend's house, train trip or family get-together sounds highly desirable, there's nothing better. Swapping a bulky ATX case, monitor, keyboard and assorted cables for a slim clamshell is a luxury that rivals the little bowl of warmed mixed nuts that you get when flying first class, even if most gaming laptops weigh in at around four kilos.

Secondly, look at the processors on offer and avoid those that were designed from the get-go for a laptop. Say no to processors like Intel's Pentium M (as found in Centrino systems), as although they're very low-voltage and will notch up an impressive battery life, they can't generate the horsepower that's essential for running today's demanding games. Instead, look for processors that have been adapted directly from desktop systems. They will have been modified slightly so that they run cooler, but are still the most powerful processors you'll come across in a laptop.

Thirdly, buy a laptop with as much RAM as you can afford. Hardware upgrades, as you can imagine, are next to impossible to perform on a laptop so it's essential that you buy the highest spec model possible. Don't settle for less RAM in your laptop

than you'd want in your desktop, so get 1Gb, minimum. Some laptops will enable you to install extra RAM at a later date via a removable panel on the base of the machine, but these are rare; none of the four we test over the page feature this. None of the four feature upgradeable graphics, either; although some models do enable you to install a new graphics card, they're very rare and very expensive.

Make sure you get either the ATI Mobility Radeon 9700 or nVidia GeForce FX7500Go graphics chip. There's very little difference between the two, though we'd plump for the ATI as it currently has a slight edge.

As far as sound is concerned, you're in luck; the recent trend for releasing external USB sound cards means you can still connect your laptop to a multi channel surround sound speaker system. If all you're going to connect are headphones, you'll be fine with the onboard sound.

In a nutshell: buy a laptop with as high a starting spec as possible. It bears repeating that upgrading the core components of a laptop yourself is nigh on impossible; you can forget about swapping out the processor or hard drive for something of a higher calibre immediately.

Want a tech topic covered?
Then mail your request to:
mark.sutherns@futurenet.co.uk

WHAT NEXT...?

Check out Money Pit over the page for four of the latest gaming laptops.

Sit down with a cup of tea and weigh up the performance/portability trade-off: which is more important to you?

Realise that a gaming laptop can drain its batteries in as little as 45 minutes...

...But that you can take the mains adapter with you when travel.

Factor in the price of a decent laptop bag for carrying your new baby around.

Check your home insurance policy – if you lose your thousand-pound laptop on the road, is it covered?

MASTERCLASS

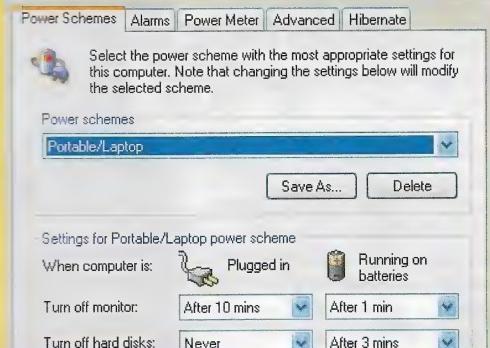
How to...

Extend your battery life



1 Lighting the screen is one of the biggest drains on a battery, and Windows XP will automatically dim it slightly when it's not on mains power. You can adjust the screen brightness yourself via the keyboard but avoid the temptation of automatically increasing the brightness to compensate for the dip. Instead, position yourself so that the screen doesn't face any bright light sources.

Power Options Properties



2 Windows XP features a whole host of power-saving features and these can be accessed via the Power Options icon in the Control Panel. They include the invaluable Windows Power Schemes, which will save the battery by turning off the screen when you haven't been doing any typing or mouse-clicking for a while. It can also put your laptop into a low-power standby mode, where its state is saved in the RAM for a rapid start up.



3 When you're on battery power, disconnect or turn off any peripherals that you're not using. Optical mice, wireless network cards and USB bus-powered sound cards all draw their power from your laptop's batteries like little electronic leeches. With PCMCIA card peripherals, take care to remove them completely; don't just deactivate them in the Windows Device Manager or Remove Hardware wizard.

GAMING LAPTOP GRUDGE MATCH

Which portable powerhouse do you want at your side?

BY MIKE ABOLINS

More than meets the eye

D500E £1,174

AJP www.ajp.co.uk 020 8208 9744

Look at the photos of all four laptops featured here and you'll soon come to the same conclusion as we did: the AJP is the most incongruous computer of the lot. It does not have the looks of the Rock, the distinctive widescreen of the Tiny or the name recognition of the Dell. It's unobtrusive and blends into the background. The AJP is the PC equivalent of a digestive biscuit.

But starting up the AJP and slipping your favourite game into the DVD-RW drive is like turning over the unappealing biscuit to discover it's actually a chocolate digestive. With caramel. That's the beauty of the AJP: it surprises you. Even though it shares the same Pentium 4 processor as the Tiny and Rock laptops, as well as the same graphics processor, it manages to do so much more with it.

Take the Pentium 4 processor, for instance. It's clocked at 3.40GHz, the same as the Tiny and the Rock. It's got the same 800MHz front side bus (referring to the speed at which data travels to and from the processor) but the P4 processor and motherboard combo used in the AJP features L2 and L3 caches of 1MB each. Now this



**PCGAMER
MUST
BUY**

isn't the kind of spec that you'll find on AJP's or Rock's website or that we'd usually roll out here, but

the L2 and L3 cache is where data is stored temporarily on its way to and from the processor and RAM. This matters because the L2 and L3 cache on the AJP is twice the size of that on the Rock and the Tiny, whose own L2 and L3 cache is 512MB each. The

It's a chocolate digestive. With caramel

result of this is evident in the AJP's edge in the *Far Cry* and *Doom 3* frames-per-second benchmarks, where

it leads all four laptops, thanks to the more efficient transfer of data between the processor, RAM and rest of the laptop.

Also consider the screen; it's no larger physically than the Dell or Rock – it's still a regular 15-inch LCD – but

ON THE DISC Perplexed by strange technical terms? Consult the PC GAMER dictionary > Resources

it runs at 1600 x 1200, which is considerably larger than the competition. Admittedly the Mobility Radeon 9700 chip doesn't have the oomph or the resources to run any game smoothly at that high a resolution, but it's great for many

KEY FEATURES

- > 3DMark 2001 SE: 12,888
- > 3DMark 03: 3,792
- > X2: The Threat: 38.84fps
- > Far Cry demo, 1024x768: 51.64fps
- > Doom 3 demo, 1024x768: 43.11fps
- > Battery Life: 45 minutes

other uses you might put the laptop to, such as digital photography. In fact, it's tough to come down hard on anything associated with the AJP, and not just because of the relatively low price, which is perhaps the machine's biggest surprise of all. The keyboard feels reassuringly firm and durable, a theme that's repeated throughout. You would certainly have no qualms about taking it anywhere and you even get a laptop bag thrown in, too.

Given all that, it's easy to wholeheartedly recommend the AJP as the best gaming laptop

here; it's such a genuine pleasure to play with and use on a daily basis. It's refreshingly free of hype and the baggage that brings, preferring instead to offer up a solid, earnest performance that more than manages to put the other three laptops here in the shade.

PCGAMER

PERFORMANCE 93%
VALUE 97%

> Beyond its plain façade it's amazing

96%

Little wonder POWERLITE MS 3.4 £1,099

Tiny www.tiny.com 08708 303 156

On paper, Tiny's Powerlite (in fact a re-badged MSI MegaBook) has a lot going for it. It looks pleasingly chunky in a Judge Dredd kind of way, boasts an impressive specification, and even matches the HP with a 16:9 aspect ratio widescreen LCD display. This is dead handy for watching movies, and provides a greatly improved field of vision when playing first-person shooters. But once you start using it, the Tiny leaves you flat.

Despite the widescreen display, the resolution is the lowest of all four laptops here. When you've got the relative power of ATI's Mobility Radeon 9700 at your back, it would be nice to use it to notch up the detail on screen. The P4 processor is as powerful as that found in the AJP and Rock laptops (minus the AJP's enlarged L2/L3 cache), the standard 1Gb of RAM is present, as is the DVD re-writer. But we were left feeling that the Tiny doesn't use the components it's been given as well as the other laptops here.

Allied to these issues are concerns over the Powerlite's build quality; our

review machine was dogged by an unreliable optical drive and a flat CMOS battery. Although they're unlikely to manifest themselves on every laptop that rolls off the production line, these bugaboos don't inspire a lot of confidence in this machine, even when you factor in that trademark Tiny price.



PCGAMER
PERFORMANCE 73%
VALUE 62%
» A good concept poorly executed

KEY FEATURES

- » 3D Mark 2001 SE: 11,449
- » 3D Mark 03: 2,755
- » X2: The Threat: 32.88fps
- » Far Cry demo, 1024x768: 31.56fps
- » Doom 3 demo, 1024x768: 14.40fps
- » Battery Life: 68 minutes



Not-so-hot sauce PAVILION ZD7265EA £1,499

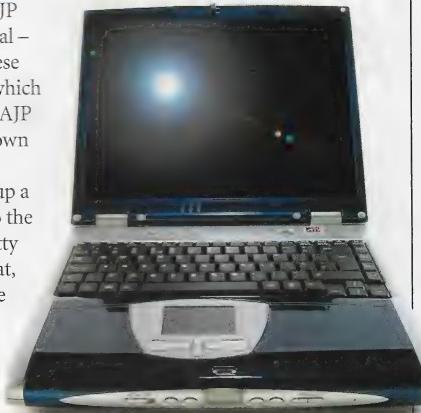
HP www.hpl.co.uk 0870 010 4320

Rock and roll XTREME XTR-3.4EE £2348

Rock www.rockdirect.co.uk 08709 909 090

Even though the Rock and AJP machines are nearly identical – both are made by a Taiwanese company (www.clevo.com.tw) which sells unbranded laptops to Rock, AJP and others, who then stick their own logos on – there's enough of a difference for the Rock to notch up a lower score. This is mainly due to the fact that the Rock Xtreme, as pretty as it is with its iridescent blue coat, is £1,000 more expensive than the AJP yet can't match the cheaper machine's performance. As we mentioned earlier, this is down to the disparity in the L2 and L3 cache in the two machines, and although that's the only disadvantage that the Rock is faced with, the extra features that can be found on the XTR can't make up the lost ground.

The Rock has, by far, the best screen. Ignore the fact that it's got a lower resolution and concentrate instead on the X-Glass coating, which replaces the flat matte surface usually found on LCD monitors with a glossy, glass-like one. A gimmick it may be, but it makes colours noticeably deeper and more vibrant. This is also



the only machine here with Bluetooth, which is a bit of a gimmick these days, but comes in handy with wireless peripherals, such as mice. But when you're listing the gimmicks as the high-points of a computer costing more than twice the competition, you know you're scraping the barrel.

PCGAMER
PERFORMANCE 89%
VALUE 54%
» Overpriced and under-performing

The Pavilion features more extras than an EastEnders double-bill, so many that you don't know quite where to start. The magnificent 16:9 aspect ratio display makes up for the disappointment we experienced with the Tiny, thanks to a healthy resolution of 1680 x 1050 and a glossy coating like the Rock. It's also got a multi-format memory card reader, superb (for a laptop, anyway) Harman Kardon speakers, and a full size keyboard. The attention to detail is remarkable and nowhere is it more evident in the button that disables the touchpad. This means you can connect a regular mouse and enjoy it without fear of brushing over the touchpad while using the keys and mistakenly shifting your aim. If you've never used a laptop with a touchpad before this might sound a bit far-fetched, but anyone who has will be smiling with delight.

Being the only laptop of the quartet to feature NVIDIA graphics in the shape of the GeForce FX5700Go, it's a shame that the rest of the HP's specification doesn't match up to its extras list. Because this Pavilion's processor is only a 3.2GHz Pentium 4 (with a 512KB L2 and L3 cache) and comes with the basic 512Mb of RAM, it's hard to draw any hard conclusions

over the relative performances of NVIDIA and ATI graphics technology. It is possible to have F1 upgrade the RAM, cramming in as much as 2Gb's worth. While this would help the cause, the slower processor is still hard to reconcile.

Despite the lower processor speed and lack of memory, the HP managed at least to pip the ATI-powered Tiny in 3D Mark 2001 SE and was closer to several of the other benchmarks. The only distinct drop in scores came in the most intensive, and therefore most demanding, test, requiring of a performance processor and extra RAM, benchmarks of *Doom 3* and 3D Mark 03. But it's a country mile away from the AJP and Rock in terms of grunt and, at the end of the day, that's what this get-together is all about.

There's no doubt in our minds the Pavilion would be the easiest laptop to live with and use as a multipurpose PC. All of the extras mean the most flexible machine here, but a portable monster for ravaging LAN parties it's all a bit too civilised.

PCGAMER
PERFORMANCE 71%
VALUE 83%
» A pleasure, until you fire up *Doom 3*

Flat is where it's at IMAGEQUEST Q17+ £340

Hyundai www.hyundaiq.com 01296 505316

The standard of flat panel monitors just keeps rising. This silver-faded beauty from Hyundai has been designed from the outset with gamers in mind, featuring a nippy 12ms response time. That means there's no perceptible lag between your mouse movements and what you see on screen in a first-person shooter, unlike the vast majority of early flat panel screens. That's essential for anyone who plays online – you don't want to be at even a millisecond's disadvantage when you turn that corner in *Counter-Strike*, and run straight into the opposition.

Happily, that excellent response time is matched by a display that's bright, with near-perfect colour reproduction. *UT2004's* Facing World map is a near revelation, the bronze pyramids shimmering in the starlight, shock-streams and rocket trails flitting through the sky. What's more, with a contrast ratio of 500:1 the brightness is evenly distributed through the entire panel – there's not a dull or washed-out corner, very handy when you're sneaking through the shady corridor on *CS Source's* Dust map. Thankfully, the screen defaults to around 50% brightness, and around 80% contrast, meaning that, out of the box, there's room to play with the controls, setting it up for

your own preferences. The control panel is well laid out and simple to use. Within a minute of unpacking the box, we'd plugged it all in, and were trawling a server browser, ready to test things out.

DVI and analogue connections are included – the DVI connection producing the best images by far. Along with the AV connections, there's a pair of speakers, headphone connections, and a couple of USB ports embedded within the base. The speakers are terrible, nothing more than an afterthought, but at least they're tucked away in the base, adding nothing to the footprint. The USB connections are a far more useful addition but do require an extra lead to be run from the back of your PC to the monitor stand, adding a little to the clutter.

The Imagequest's stand is simply superb, allowing for the screen to be placed at varying heights, depths and angles on your desk. This model is one of the few we've seen with enough flexibility to provide a comfortable viewing position.

PCGAMER

PERFORMANCE 84%
VALUE 81%

>Sleek and sharp. A solid silver screen

86%



It looks gorgeous, and so will your fastest games. We like.

Want something reviewed in Money Pit? Tell us all about it now

mark.sutherns@futurenet.co.uk

Mean keen machine SPARKLE GEFORCE PCX6600 GT £147

Sparkle www.sparkle.com.tw 01302 364 155

When nVidia rolled out the range-topping GeForce 6800, it promised a whole family of more affordable video chips boasting the same white-hot technology would follow. And now the Santa Clara, California graphics goliath is delivering. At £150 this board, based on the new mid-range GeForce 6600 GT chipset, should be in reach of most frag-happy gamers. All the usual GeForce 6 suspects make an appearance, including DirectX 9.0c, a dedicated 2D video engine, nVidia's *Doom 3*-friendly UltraShadow technology, and the latest GDDR3 video memory (totalling 128Mb). Just remember, the GeForce 6600 is for the all-new PCI Express only – owners of AGP-equipped motherboards need not apply.

But most intriguingly, the 6600 GT is compatible with nVidia's impressive SLI dual video card technology. With a supporting motherboard, you can add another 6600 in future and almost double the performance. Of course, to make the 6600 chipset

cheaper, nVidia has taken out the knife. Gone are three of the 6800's six vertex units. Likewise, the 6600's pixel pipeline count is a parsimonious eight to the 6800's glutinous tally of 16. But don't assume you'll only get half the rendering power. This card is clocked at a stratospheric 500MHz. All that techno mumbo-jumbo translates into a 3DMark05 score of 3,301, while *Doom 3* is playable at high detail and a resolution of 1280x1024, so long as you can live without anti-aliasing.

PCGAMER

PERFORMANCE 86%
VALUE 90%

>Great performance, with SLI support too

88%

Close but no cigar ATI RADEON X700 XT £175

ATi www.ati.com 0118 934 4322

ATi and nVidia, the two big noises of the PC graphics industry, are sworn enemies. We can all agree on that, surely. Yet so closely matched are the two companies' current product line-ups, we'd forgive you for thinking there's something rotten in Denmark, if you'll forgive the Tarantinoism.

As sure as night follows day, ATI has followed nVidia in releasing a new mid-range, sub-£200 3D graphics chipset, the Radeon X700 XT. Just like the GeForce 6600, the X700 is best thought of as a top-end video card sliced in two and predictably matches it with eight pixel pipelines. Interestingly, though, it ups the ante with fully six vertex engines – that's as many as even the most expensive £400-plus video cards currently available. In terms of pixel pushing poise, it's a painfully close call between the new X700 XT and the GeForce 6600 GT. We ran both cards through a gauntlet of punishing game tests and found that while

individual punches are landed, neither card achieves a knock-out blow. Unsurprisingly given the performance of nVidia and ATI's flagship cards, the X700 can't quite match the 6600 at most resolution and visual quality settings. Nor will you be surprised to hear the X700 has the edge in games based on the ATI-friendly *Half-Life 2: Source* engine. But the only difference worth bitching about is the absence of a technology in the ATI stable to compete with nVidia's dual video card SLI tech.

PCGAMER

PERFORMANCE 86%
VALUE 74%

>Loses to the 6600 only in the SLI stakes

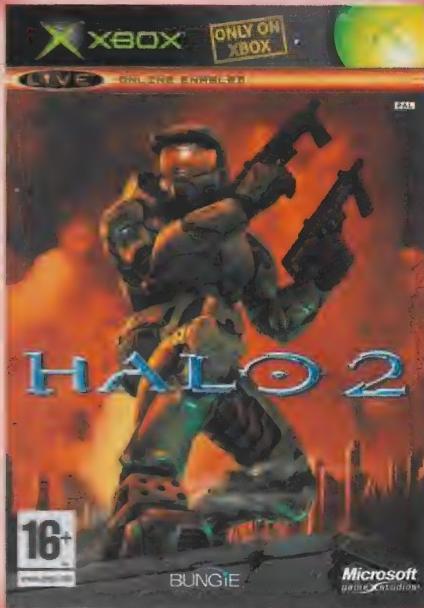
83%

SEASON'S BEATINGS

crash! bang!

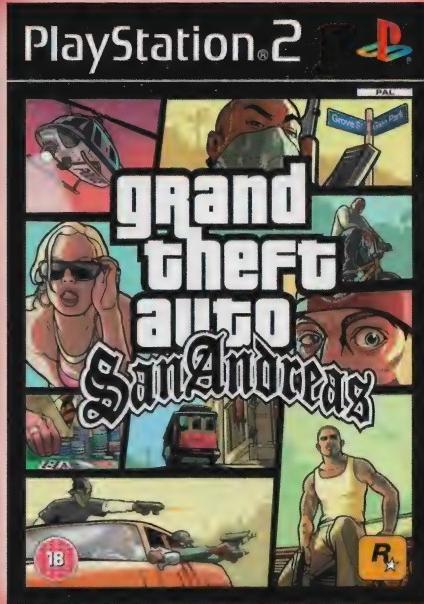
Available on:

XBOX



Available on:

PS2



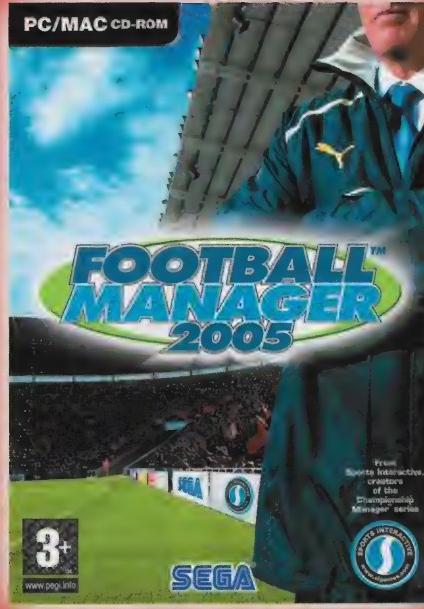
Available on:

PC



Available on:

PC



SERIOUS PRESENTS
FOR SERIOUS PLAYERS

www.gamestation.co.uk
TEL: 0870 112 1111

Ref: PCG01

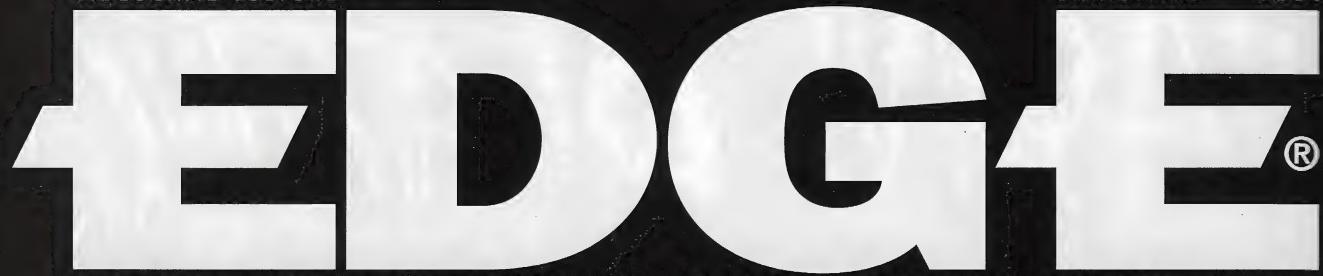
WHILE STOCKS LAST. SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY. PRICES MAY VARY BETWEEN FORMATS. GAMESTATION AND RELATED MARKS ARE OWNED BY GAMES STATION LIMITED. © 2004 GAMES STATION LTD. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

gamestation

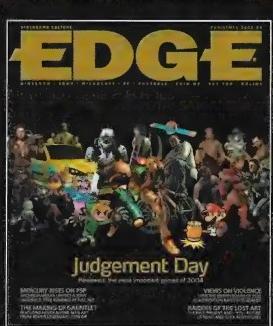


VIDEOGAME CULTURE

CHRISTMAS 2004



NINTENDO | SONY | MICROSOFT | PC | PORTABLE | COIN-OP | SET-TOP | ONLINE



In issue 144:

The definitive reviews of
Halo 2, GTA: San Andreas
and Metroid Prime 2: Echoes
(and 16 other key games for Christmas 2004)

On sale now

BIG GEAR HUNT

Your definitive guide to the best hardware money can buy

BEST IN CLASS

Processors

ATHLON FX-53

£750 AMD
www.amd.com
01276 803100



"The most powerful games processor ever produced, and it's even ready to support the arrival of 64-bit gaming in the near future."

Motherboards

K8NNXP-940

£140 Gigabyte Technology
www.giga-byte.com
01908 362700



"The memory controller has been integrated into the CPU on AMD's faster chips, but a good motherboard like this is still a must."

Graphics Cards

Radeon X800T

£350 ATI
www.ati.com
Via distributors
(see website)



"A sickeningly, offensively fast card that instantly renders the outgoing generation of cards hopelessly redundant." **PCG 138 92%**

Optical DVD Drives

GSA-4081B

£72 LG Electronics
www.lge.co.uk
01753 491500



"The only drive out there that lets you write to every type of media, this is as flexible a drive as you could want in your machine."

Monitors

BENQ FP783

£370 BenQ
www.benq.co.uk
01442 301 000



"The best gaming LCD we've seen, with the best response rate. Makes games look the way the developers intended." **PCG 140 89%**

Want That

VOODOO VIBE

£2,000
www.voodoopc.com
188 798 6636 (US)

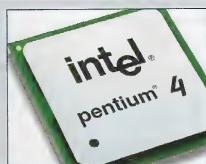


"A mammoth 'home theatre' PC that streams content to your TV via its own custom Xbox. Play Doom 3, watch TV, never move again."

MID RANGE

INTEL PENTIUM 4E 3.0GHZ

£155 Intel
www.intel.com
01793 403000



"The P4 may not be long for this world, but this chip still packs a punch. Surprisingly for Intel, it offers decent value for money too."

P4P800 DELUXE

£85 Asus
<http://uk.asus.com>
0031 591 668190
(Holland)



"Intel devotees have plenty of motherboards to choose from, but Asus just manages to nose out the competition with this option."

GEFORCE 6800 GT

£300 XFX
www.nvidia.com
Via distributors
0870 443 0880



"At this price it's arguably the best all-round graphics card available. An excellent choice for playing Doom 3." **PCG 140 92%**

ND-2500A

£60 NEC
www.nec.co.uk
020 8752 3665



"Supporting the fastest DVD+R and DVD-R media around, NEC's drives can be picked up for a bargain if you buy your own software."

CTX S762G

£325 CTX
www.ctxeurope.com
01923 810801



"Doesn't have the glitz of its rivals but it boasts a decent response time and a crisp clear gaming image." **PCG 140 83%**

PRICE WATCH

Get the best price on kit by contacting three different retailers and comparing costs. Find more contacts in the PCG Directory on the disc.

Aria

0870 4992499
www.aria.co.uk

Dabs

www.dabs.com

Komplett

0870 8727107
www.komplett.co.uk

Microdirect

www.pcindex.co.uk

Overclock

www.overclock.co.uk

Overclockers

0870 4330880
www.overclockers.co.uk

PCIndex

www.pcindex.co.uk

PC World

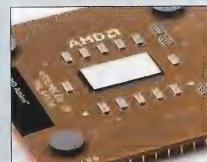
0870 2420444
www.pcworld.co.uk

ON THE DISCS Plenty more kit rated in the extended version of Big Gear Hunt > Resources

BUDGET CHOICE

ATHLON XP 3000+

£100 AMD
www.amd.com
01276 803100



"AMD has always been the budget builder's best ally, and with the release of its 64-bit chips the XP range takes up the mantle."

8KRA2+

£75 Epox
www.epox.nl
0031 182 633355
(Holland)



"Proof that you don't need to spend a fortune to get good performance from a motherboard. Plenty of features too."

GEFORCE FX5900XT

£120 Nvidia
www.nvidia.com
0118 903 3000



"Superceded as the best mid ranger by ATI's Pro cards, the 5900XT remains a superb poly pusher for just over 100 notes." **PCG 133 87%**

DVD 1648/AAP

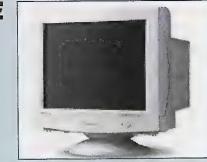
£23 AOpen
www.aopen.nl
0031 736 459516
(Holland)



"Cut out the need for DVD-writing and you can pick up a reliable and fast DVD/CD-ROM combi drive cheaply – this fits the bill."

SAMTRON 76E

£70 Samsung Electronics
www.samsungelectronics.co.uk
01932 455000



"CRTs still offer the best value around, and Samsung is one of the better options. This 17-inch beauty is just 70 notes."

GET MORE FROM YOUR GAMES

Discover the hidden settings that boost your favourite games

BY JON HICKS

DO IT... NOW!

Rev Half-Life 2

PERFORMANCE

PROBLEM *Half-Life 2* is a tiny bit demanding

REMEDY Adjust it according to your video card's power

RESULT 48% more physical physics. Perhaps.

Valve have kindly passed over a few notes on what *Half-Life 2*'s Source engine is capable of on various 3D cards.

First off, the techies in Seattle reckon that it's possible to play *HL2* with a measly DirectX7 graphics card. That takes you all the way back to GeForce 2's and Radeon 7000's – it's even just about possible to run it on a Voodoo 3, although you'll see lots of horrid blank areas. They'll definitely be too weak

to handle model skinning, so you'd do well to go into the advanced section of the video settings and turn model detail right down if you've got a DX7 card like the dreaded GeForce 4 MX.

If the rest of your PC is equally geriatric, then dropping the texture detail is a good step: especially helpful if you've got a sub-64Mb graphics card or minimal system RAM. Shadow detail is less complicated but also worth a look on lower-end kit. DirectX 7 kit reduces it automatically, but it's worth setting it to Low manually if you've got a newer card but a slow processor. You can also reduce the load on the CPU by reducing the level of sound effects leaning on it:

set Audio Quality to Low for minimal audio-based exertion, and don't touch High unless you've got a super-fast processor. Another budget bypass is available if you've got a low-grade TFT: a fixed low-res display can be smoothed by picking a higher antialiasing mode. Ensure water detail is set to simple reflections; only proper DirectX9 kit like the 9700 Pro, GeForce 6600 and above can handle the Reflect World setting. You can also improve image quality by enabling "Wait for Vertical sync"; it'll slow things down but only by a few frames per second.

ON THE DISC Upgrade your games machine with our hand-picked selection of apps and utilities > Toolkit

SIZZLING!



Caution: running *HL2* on a lesser PC may open a gateway to hell.

If you've got a really top-drawer pixel pump like an X800 or a 6800, and the system to back it up, then you can pull out all the stops – the boffins advise setting Water Detail to Reflect All, turning up the resolution and antialiasing, and sitting back

to see just what that £300+ price tag actually bought you. That said, if you've turned up the resolution beyond the default, try dropping the filtering to trilinear and picking a lower antialiasing mode for a dramatic increase in performance.

UTILITY OF THE MONTH

GOOGLE DESKTOP SEARCH

You might think that your file system is a disorganized mess, but if Google can catalogue the internet then it's hardly going to break into a sweat when faced with a few paltry gigabytes of MP3s. Google Desktop Search digs through your hard drive with terrifying efficiency, and it doesn't cost as much as flash up a loading bar – much less any idiot talking animals. It takes a while to catalogue everything and is worryingly keen to connect to the internet, but by God it's effective. Try it now at <http://desktop.google.com>.

DO IT... THIS WEEKEND!

Rome freely

RECONFIGURING

PROBLEM *Rome*'s configuration options do not grant absolute power

REMEDY Twiddle your ini files, consult soothsayer

RESULT More factions and higher resolutions

Rome won't give you a full choice of factions to play – but this is easily fixed. Start a campaign, then locate your Program Files directory and seek out *Rome - Total War* > Data > world > maps > campaign > imperial_campaign. Open the descry_strat file in Notepad, and you can see the factions helpfully segregated into 'Playable' and

'Non-Playable' – just swap them around to suit.

Overthrow the tyranny of *Rome*'s fixed graphics resolutions by seeking out descr_auto_optimise_options.txt. Make a backup, then open the original in Notepad and make sure Word Wrap is off. Your system settings are ranked 1 to 4 according to the chart at the top of the file: CPU, RAM and Video RAM. Video RAM lists 64, 128, 256 and 512, so if you've got a 64MB graphics card you score 1, if it's 128Mb you score 2, etc.

Using the chart, the game produces three numbers for your PC's performance: a



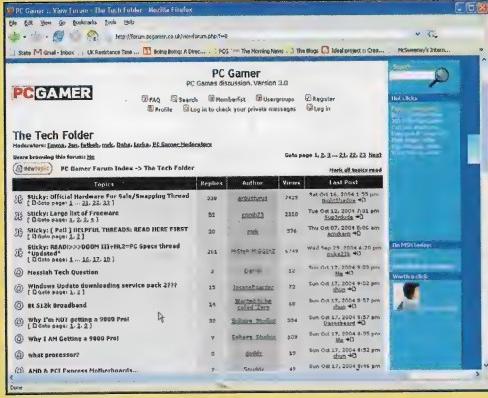
Make the carnage even more realistic.

2GHz CPU with 512MB RAM and a 64MB card would be 2, 3, 1, for example. It also checks your vertex shader support and adds that to the list (check yours via Google or a hardware website). A GeForce 5200 has Vertex Shader 2.0, so the full listing for our sample PC would be

2, 2, 3, 1. This shows the default game settings for your PC's spec. Look down the left-hand list until you find the line beginning with your four numbers, then look across until you find the "max_supported" screen res. Increase these to resolutions you prefer. Save and restart.

Best of the Tech Forum

POST SUBJECT
Dual channel memory



Bemused by what all those slots on your motherboard actually do? You're not alone. Trafman cast the bread of his ignorance on the intellectual waters of the PC Gamer Tech Folder.

Trafman When I had my PC open today, I noticed that I have three RAM slots, not unusual. I also noticed that I had two together of the same colour and one separate. Is this the dual channel? I currently have one stick in the blue and one in the green. Would it be faster in the blue? It's a MSI K7N2 motherboard.

Ivor The Engine Driver Yes, that will be the Dual Channel slot.

Trafman Ooooooooh so it'll go faster if I put it in that slot instead? How much faster?

Helix Dual Channel is usually somewhere around twice the speed.

Nemesiz Though moving the memory sticks to the Dual Channel bus will only marginally improve actual performance, by 3-10 percent.

MIP You'd get maybe a 1% performance increase with Dual Channel if you're lucky. The Athlon XP doesn't have dual memory channels, just the chipset controller does, so the additional bandwidth rarely has a chance to make a difference. It's only in the latest 939 socket Athlon 64's that the CPU actually has two channels and it makes a real difference.

Don_vercetti Even then not that much. Put it this way, in synthetic memory benchmarks (SiSoft Sandra) I used to struggle to get 2500Mb/s, now I get just under 3000. However, that rarely translates into real world performance.

Ivor the engine driver What RAM have you got anyway? As long as it's PC-3200 (DDR 400) then it'll be fine. I made a mistake I think, by connecting PC-2700 (DDR 333) RAM in there. My mobo wouldn't load up XP nor could I reformat my HDD; I kept getting an error. Everything was fine when I fitted in my other mobo though. Not quite sure what's wrong with my K7N2.

Trafman It's 2700. I won't be able to sort it out if it goes wrong, as I don't have a spare mobo. Fook it. Thanks for your help.

So, no quick speed boost - but thanks for the memory, ahahaha. Discover yet-worse jokes and still-better technical advice at <http://forum.pcgamer.co.uk/viewforum.php?f=8>

DO IT... THIS MONTH!

UNSIMPRESSIVE

PROBLEM Your attempts to have sex and starve people in bathrooms fail

REMEDY Get the right version of DirectX and update everything

RESULT Uninterrupted deviant behaviour

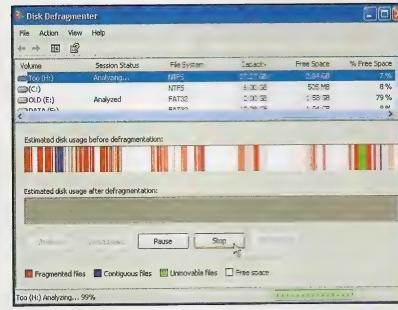
Bad news, owners of coal-powered CPUs: *The Sims 2* needs a 32Mb T&L equipped graphics card (Radeon 7000/ GeForce 2) to really get moving, and while you can just about get it started on integrated graphics you'll

Sort your Sims

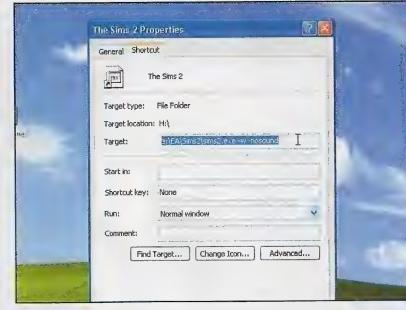
need at least a 2GHz CPU to shoulder the burden. There's a checking program which you can get from [http://sims.servopro.com/TS2SysReqc.zip](http://sims.servopro.com/downloads/download.php?download=http://sims2.servopro.com/TS2SysReqc.zip).

Assuming you can scrape over the minimum spec, installation may be stopped with a warning that you need a DirectX9.0c graphics adapter – this may be a problem with the version of

DirectX included in Service Pack 2. Fix it by opening My Computer, right-clicking *The Sims* CD, choose Open, then find the DirectX folder and copy the DSETUP.DLL file into C:\Windows\System32. If that doesn't work, try removing the existing version of DirectX (there are plenty of tools for this – try <http://downloads.guru3d.com/download.php?det=522>) and reinstalling it from *The Sims 2* disc.



1 Dull though it sounds, defragmenting your hard drive can make a real difference to how your Sims perform. Fire up Start > All Programs > Accessories > System Tools > Disk Defragmenter.



2 Right click the desktop shortcut, choose Properties and add -w -nosound at the end of the Target box. This runs the game with minimal graphics or sound.



3 If your system is just too weak to hack it, you can kludge things into a playable state: turn down the graphics, disable the walls, and spin the camera away from heavily-populated areas.

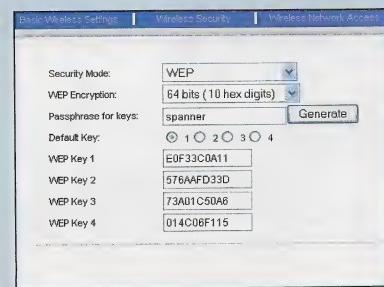


4 You can get your Sims to do many things, but living with a high refresh rate isn't one of them. The game wants 60MHz, so disable any force-refresh features in your 3D card's display options.

TOO EMBARRASSED TO ASK...

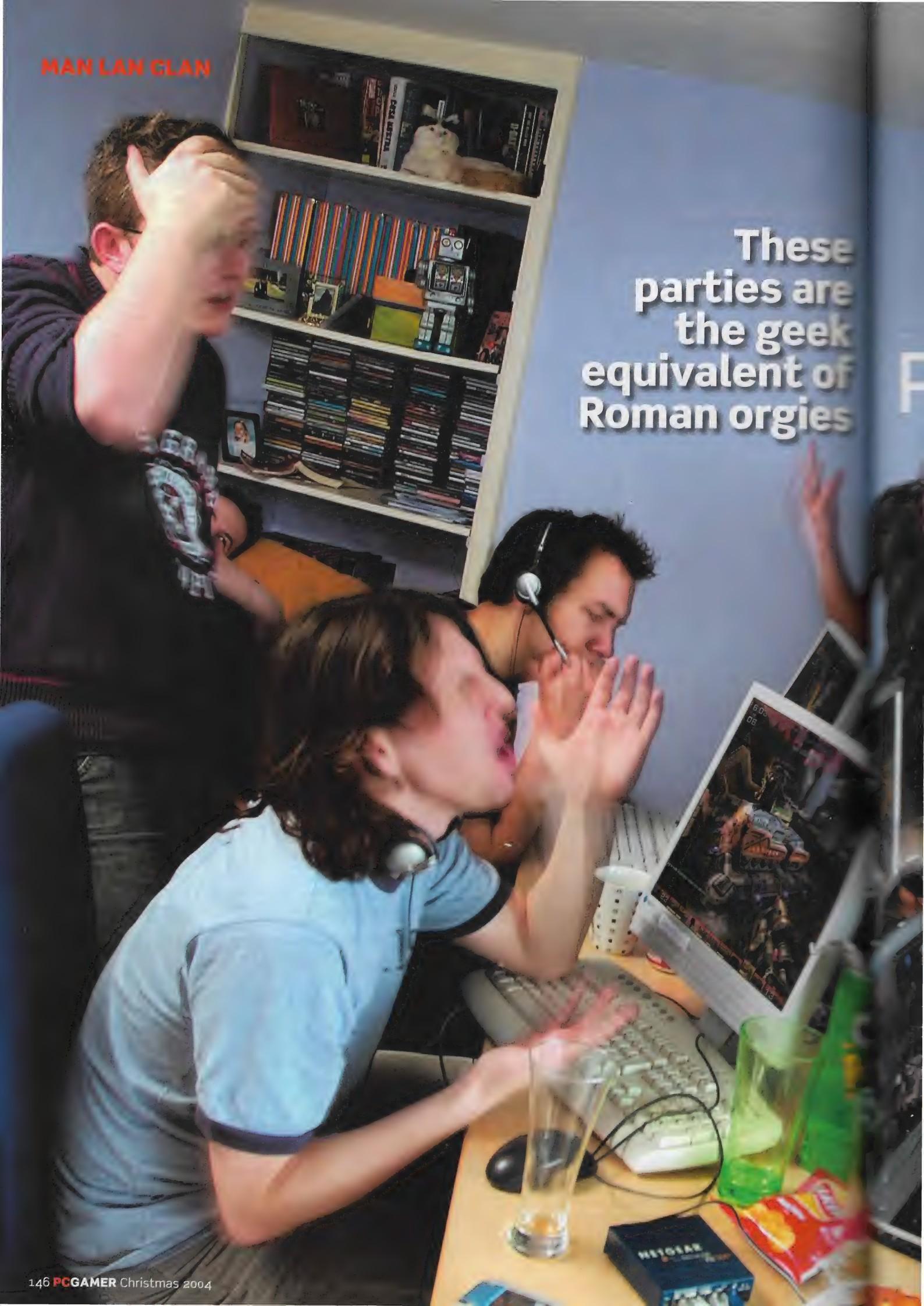
"WHAT IS... WPA?"

Why, it's WiFi Protected Access, you inquisitive soul. If you don't have a wireless network then you'd be forgiven for never having heard of it, and should probably wander away now in search of something more edifying. If you do have a wireless network, however, then it's something you should introduce to your life right away. Unsurprisingly enough, it secures wireless networks, by encrypting data with a 128-bit key that is used to stop anybody listening in on your little network. For simple home security, delve into the firmware of your access point, look up the WPA Pre-Shared Key option and you should be able to set a password that will be required before anybody can log on. The security isn't bullet-proof, but it's a lot better than the old WEP standard – or leaving your network open to any Centrino-equipped chancer who might happen by.



MAN LAN CLAN

These
parties are
the geek
equivalent of
Roman orgies



24 HOUR LAN PARTY PEOPLE

Your guide to the PC GAMER LAN party, and how to host your own

Playing PC games with your friends for 24 hours. Can you think of anything more debauched? PC LAN parties are the geek equivalent of Roman orgies – food, drink and stupid entertainment. It's something that all gamers should put a weekend aside for, now and then. Arrange to meet up with a few friends,

network a bunch of PCs, and play through until the early hours. You'll enter fresh-faced, eager, desperate to play. However many hours later, you'll leave tired and broken, stooping out of the door blinking at the early morning sunlight. But it's those fleeting, magical hours in between that matter: stepping over sleeping bodies, curling up under a table, catching a few hours sleep before rousing and playing on. You've heard about those gamers in Korea who spend days on end slumped over their keyboards in LAN cafes? Yes, you can be just like them.

 **ON THE DISC** Patches, mods, modules and updates: you and your guests will need them to play your chosen games. See > Game Extras

A LAN party is a time for playing, eating, supping, and being merry. It's a time and place where violence, world domination and sick bloodletting becomes a shared experience, something to chuckle about with your friends. By the end of the evening, you'll be dulled to the sight of your best friend's innards flying past your ears, immune to the slaughter of thousands of brave young men. In fact, you'll delight in it.

But what games to play? LAN parties work best when you take time to consider what particular virtual worlds you're going to be adventuring in. It's no use turning up with eight copies of *Painkiller* and just expecting to have a great time. Instead, you need to sit down and consider exactly what makes a great LAN game. Except that you don't, because we've done it for you.

This is our guide for making your LAN party go off with a real bang. The games to play and why we chose them, and how well they worked out for us when we were staring bleary-eyed at each other at 2:00am. We didn't want to make this into a techy-geeky thing, but we've also included a few technical tips for getting a network up and running. Do try this at home, kids.

THE DO'S ✓

DO Install all the games on your PC before you arrive. Otherwise you're going to face a couple of hours of disc swapping and staring at loading bars.

DO Burn a pre-party CD with all the patches and mods you'll need, and pass it around your friends.

DO Stock up on fizzy caffeine, teabags, and coffee the night before.

DO Ensure that your guests are bringing fold-away seating and other furniture.

DO Host the games on the fastest PC available.

DO Make sure that weapons are set to 'stay even after pick-up' in the FPS games you play.

DO Grab No-CD cracks for all the games you're going to play. Check out www.megagames.com for an exhaustive listing.

THE RIGHT MIX

PICKING YOUR PLAYLIST

The games you play at a LAN party aren't the same games you load up at home, on your own. This is a social situation, not you sitting alone in the dark, slogging your way through single-player situations. Nor are the games that you play online much improved when you invite your team-mates into your house - instead, LAN parties require a whole new paradigm of play. Here's a guide to picking your playlist and we've put our favourite LAN games on page 150.

Rule #1 Co-operation is better than competition

Look at it this way - you might find it highly entertaining to repeatedly beat your best friend about the place, but he's not going to be enjoying himself. Similarly, you're not going to have the best of times if you find yourself routinely re-spawning into a hail of rockets. You're going to be thoroughly demoralised. You'll moan. So this is what you do. Find games that you can play *together*. Co-operate modes aren't pervasive in PC gaming, a pity, but they are out there.

Rule #2 Choose teams

Before the players arrive, sort out their seating arrangements. Distribute players into two sides, with the best and worst players distributed equally. Have a rummage through your collection and find games that allow for team-play. RTSs make for brilliant extended team-battles: those new to the game can be nudged towards making the right decisions by their teammates. Hell, you can even form a line in your shorts against the far wall, captains picking their best friends first, leaving the worst of the worst covering their knees, isolated and alone. You know how it is.

Rule #3 Mix your genres

You need to have a solid plan of what you're going to play before the guests arrive. Try to moderate the types of games as the day winds into evening. No-one can possibly handle 24 hours of straight first-person shooting, so consider 'chill-out' breaks, where you all get together to play something a little more sedate. Talk to your guests before the day so you can get a handle on what they enjoy, and take that into account when making arrangements. If you've got an RPG obsessive coming to the party, make plans for an hour of *Diablo* or *Neverwinter Nights* to keep them happy, and invite everyone to bring over their favourite pre-created characters.

Rule #4 Retro runners

Don't limit yourself to full-price, off-the-shelf titles. Trawl the archives, looking for recognisable touchstones. A LAN party can be a time to reminisce. The early breed of first-person shooters, games like *Doom* and *Duke Nukem 3D*, all offer co-op play, and are still hugely entertaining. You'll be surprised just how much will come back to

you. You'll remember old secrets, where to go to pick up the big guns, old tricks for defeating the big baddies. Best of all, you'll do this together. Conversations will be dominated by "Do you remember the bit with the..." "There's a secret door around here somewhere..." and "Oh bugger. This boss is dead hard..."

Rule #5 Modern glories

In a similar vein, amateur development communities offer shared experiences that absolutely outclass commercial developers. *UT2004* in particular is infested with must LAN-play mods - Total Conversions like *Alien Swarm* and *Air Buccaneers* are novel, and almost designed for LAN-party play, and frequently put their commercial equivalents to shame.

Rule #6 A touch of class

Every gamer is different, and enjoys different objectives. For every muscled, sweat-driven machismo subscriber to *What Gun?* magazine, there's someone else who enjoys playing the support role, the medic, the engineer, the man behind the scenes who keeps the whole operation running. Look for games that support various player classes, like RPGs or some squad-based first-person shooters.

**Conversations
will be dominated by
“There’s a secret
door around here
somewhere...”**





THE SCIENCE BIT

TECHNICAL TRICKERY

Thanks to Windows XP, building a home network is as easy as sticking wires into the appropriate sockets. The operating system itself will sort out all the tricky technical gubbins, leaving you to enjoy the simple act of fraggering. If you run into problems, work through the Windows Network Trouble-Shooter, and refer to the simple steps below.

YOU WILL NEED

Ebuyer 8 Port Switch

Stick this in the middle of the room, plug it into a wall socket, and then thread any network cables into one of the ports. Et voila: a gaming network.

5m CAT-5 Cable

Unless you're planning to host a party in a barn, you won't need more than a couple of metres of cabling. Don't buy it from the high street. You can pick up five-metre cables from eBuyer for under three pounds: a chain store will charge you 15 quid.

THE DON'TS X

DON'T Let your guests turn up with unlabelled gear. In the post-party packing, items can go astray.

DON'T Invite more players than you have space for. PCs and bodies take up more space than you realise.

DON'T Use a wireless network for your gaming. It's just too slow, and prone to interference every time you turn the microwave on. Stick with normal cable connections as God intended.

DON'T Bother with sourcing a PC dedicated to hosting a server, unless you've got more than eight guests.

DON'T Waste time cooking for your guests. The fast-food industry is a significant employer, and it deserves your support.

Step #1

The very simplest network consists of a bunch of PCs and a tiny hub (also called a switch). Disconnect any broadband internet connections and associated routers, then restart every PC on your network.

Step #2

Close down any software or hardware firewalls, like Zonealarm. That's especially relevant if you're running the stronger Windows Firewall built in to Windows XP Service Pack 2 – it will attempt to block all multiplayer games from sending signals out from your PC.

Step #3

If the PC doesn't automatically detect that it has been connected to a LAN, reboot, and run the Network Setup Wizard. Reboot again, and check if it's managed to connect. Even if you don't connect immediately, run the network set-up wizard a couple of times. Sometimes this can kick the network into gear.

Step #4

If you're having problems sharing folders or passing files and patches across the network, or finding each PC, check that all the PCs are under the same workgroup. Click on the Local Area Connection icon, in the bottom right-hand corner of your desktop, and go through the settings. ▶

WHAT TO PLAY

THE BEST GAMES 1 UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004

It's as if Epic built *UT2004* for LAN play. Or at least, as if Epic built the foundations for LAN play, and let the mod-makers fill in the blanks. It's an absolutely essential game for your party - there are enough levels and extra-modes to keep you going for an entire weekend, without ever playing the same kind of game twice.

We boiled it down to three, in order to leave space for the other games pictured opposite. We took care to avoid run-and-gun mediocrity, and instead picked games that would widen our tired, drooping eyes at two o'clock in the morning. A game of deathmatch in an abandoned spaceport is never going to be wildly different from the deathmatch you were playing in an abandoned mining complex two hours ago. A game that puts you in a hot-air balloon, however...

ASSAULT

Games in *UT*'s Assault mode are all about co-operation. You need to progress through these levels as a team, working for every square foot, and every single objective. It builds a real sense of camaraderie as you all charge forwards, braving horrendous enemy fire just to



Trailer homes on Mars.

step across the door, or fire that one simultaneous link-gun stream blast that blows the reactor. The best of the maps give you multi-seat vehicles to play with, be they the tanks or the elastic Hellbender Humvee.

So, gather all the players on one side and add as many bots as the server can cope with. For a vanilla *UT* installation, *AS_Junkyard* and *AS_Glacier* are our two favourites: both see the attackers attempting to escape the setting in four wheels. In *Glacier*, the defenders are always on the back foot thanks to the horrendously powerful re-spawning ion tank that's

bearing down on their positions. It's capable of frying an entire team in a single blast: M-M-M-Monster Kill. We also recommend downloading *AS_Thrust*, part of the outstanding *UT2004* Community Bonus Pack 2. In this, you need to clamber around, and up the sides of, a multi-stage rocket, to the launch controls. Sublime.

AIR BUCCANEERS

Balloon antics have taken over the asylum.

This is a genuine oddity, an oasis of calm in the madcap FPS world. It's a hot-air balloon pirate sim. You guide your craft above the treetops, playing Capture the Flag, or Double Domination, or simple aerial Deathmatch. It requires a huge degree of co-ordination between shipmates: one player acts as pirate, another mans the guns, while you need an officer and gofer to provide direction, fire muskets, and repel boarders. It's perfect for small-scale team games.



You're drifting three hundred feet above a medieval castle, standing on a creaking wooden platform beneath an oversized canvas balloon. As you peer into the mist, eyeglass drawn, the pilot tacks into the wind, drawing closer to your enemy. The gunner brings his gun to bear - his mate ferries new rounds from the bucket into the corner, ready to reload. You're shouting orders across the room, "Avast ye, avast!", "Boarders at six o'clock," and "Higher, we must gain altitude, sir" all while cannon balls skip past your boat. Stupidly surreal, especially when you're surrounded by pizza boxes. ludocraft.oulu.fi/airbuccaneers

ALIEN SWARM

"My God, it's full of bugs."

This top-down multiplayer bug-hunt is perfect LAN fodder. You're fighting hordes of xenomorphs, not each other. In a six-person squad, each guest has a different role. Engineers lay down auto-turrets, or seal doors with their welders, medics provide those vital stimplants and health-drops, while the simple grunts provide a little covering fire.

Don't worry, there's a healthy selection of chainguns, assault rifles and shotguns. www.blackcatgames.com/swarm





2 NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

The addition of network support to Bioware's brilliant *Neverwinter Nights* has created the ultimate dungeon crawl. It means you can arrange a team, travel to the deepest, most terrifying kobold infested pits, and adventure through them... *together*. It's the very essence of tabletop AD&D, but on the PC, with the very same rigorous ruleset and opportunity for player expression. Want to play as an orcish druid? Fine. Want to play as a chaotic good orcish druid? Fine. (But you'd be better off as a True Neutral.)

Beginners should try the original campaign, which allows for a gentle introduction to PC roleplaying, but experienced groups who've grown tired of Bioware's offering should head online (nwn.bioware.com) and download a module especially for their party.

You can even import pre-fabricated characters into the game. We've included the excellent *Dreamcatcher* series, and the nightmarish *Extricis Eternum* on our discs.



3 JDoom

This is the daddy. You already know *Doom* – its intricate 3D maps were burnt into your synapses countless years ago. But did you know you can relive the original *Doom*, with your friends, through the excellent *JDoom* wrapper? While you can now play the original deathmatch maps in high-resolution polygon-vision, ignore these, and setup a co-op, on Nightmare difficulty. You'll face hundreds upon hundreds of pinkies and imps, and all that stands between them making lunch out of your giblets is a rocket-launcher between friends.

To play you'll need a copy of *JDoom*, along with *Doom* shareware. *JDoom* we've put on the discs: search for *Doom* shareware on www.3dgamers.com.



4 WARCRAFT 3

No LAN party is complete without an hour-long RTS coalition. Because not everyone knows the best route up the tech-tree, or the importance of sending your heroes out to bash creeps in the early stages of the game, we recommend bonding together to fight a larger AI menace.



5 SVEN CO-OP

Want to wade through the original *Half-Life* with your friends? With *Sven Co-op* (www.svencoop.com) you can crunch through marines, Xen soldiers and helicopters alike. Along with the recreated *Half-Life* levels, there's a selection of single shot nonsense maps, where you can just play at shooting things. Our favourite is the enormous enclosed arena, with a layer of buttons and switches on the far wall. Hitting each one triggers a separate monster to spawn in the centre, next to your friends. It's Gladiator, Gordon style: how long can you hold out against the onslaught? And, at the end of it all, will you get the thumbs up, or thumbs down? ▶

There's a real sense of camaraderie as you all charge forwards, braving the enemy fire



WHO'S FOR JELLY?

THE GAMER PARTY...

10.30 The guests arrive bearing silicon, keyboards and mice. Network cables are threaded behind the washing machine, up the walls, and out the window.

Mood Eager

11.00 Every single guest has forgotten to install the games beforehand. Before we begin the festivities, we face an extended installation session.

Mood Despondent

12.30 The first server is set up, just to test it's all working. *UT2004* deathmatch proves too much of a draw: we're still playing an hour later.

Mood Wired

13.00 Out with the shooting, in with... more shooting. We've decided to try the *Far Cry Co-op* mod. We're being chased through the forests by an army of mutant tri-gens. We come to the edge of a vast waterfall. We have no choice to leap, as one, into the pool below. It's our Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid moment.

Mood Liberated!

15.00 The party has split down the middle. While Ross, Craig, Tim and Jim set up a *Medieval* battle, Tony, Mark and Tom experiment with *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow*. Ross and Tim attempt to outflank Craig and Jim, but the plan goes sour when their entire cavalry gives up and heads home.

Mood Despotic

19.30 We've formed our own *Neverwinter Nights* team. Craig decides he wants to play a violent, schizophrenic thief, butchering all the NPCs he comes across. Again. Mark, as party leader, wants to keep the peace. Chaos ensues.

Mood Prickly

23.15 We've ordered pizza, more than we realised. When they buzz the flat to let us know the food has arrived, we're shocked to discover two scooters. "We couldn't fit it all on one bike," they explain.

Mood Bloated

01.30 *Neverwinter* has given way to *Sven Co-Op*. Because the levels are so hard, we're reduced

to working in pairs: one runs into the face of the enemy, while the other

lobbs grenade after grenade into their midst from behind.

Mood Co-ordinated

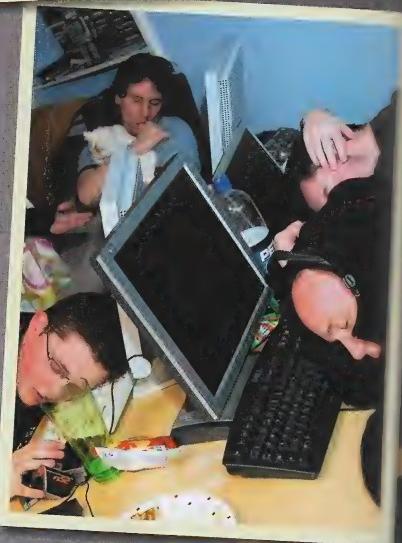
02.45 *Alien Swarm*. The first two minutes are almost serene. Then the bugs break past our flimsy defences. Craig is impregnated by the Swarm, and runs off, terrified and alone. Jim and Mark set up a steady defence, Tony and Tim support. But Mark wreaks havoc with a flamethrower, accidentally turning it on the team.

Mood Claustrophobic

04.00 Our nerves are shot. To break the spell, we've moved on to *Air Buccaneers*. As the wind swells around our craft, the sun begins to break across the hilltops. It's so late, we're so tired, but we're still playing. It's a beautiful moment.

Mood Blissed

Thank you one and all: your host was Tim Edwards, and his welcome guests were Tom Francis, Jim Rossignol, Mark Sutherns, Ross Atherton, Tony Ellis and Craig Pearson. Snapped for posterity by Simon Lees.



When they buzz the flat to let us know food has arrived, we're shocked to discover two scooters

PlayStation®₂
OFFICIAL magazine-UK

THE ONLY PS2 MAG YOU'LL EVER NEED!



PLUS!
Get The Official
**Grand Theft Auto
San Andreas**
Review!

LONDON'S BLEEDING

THE GETAWAY: BLACK MONDAY THE FIRST REVIEW

PlayStation®₂
OFFICIAL magazine-UK

10 BRAND NEW DEMOS TO PLAY! Need For Speed Underground 2, Jak 3, WRC 4, TOCA Race Driver 2, Tiger Woods 2005 and more!

IN THE MAGAZINE! 30 pages of reviews including Jak 3, NFSU2, WWE SmackDown! Vs RAW, WRC 4 and more!

FREE STUFF! Massive Killzone guide plus stickers! ►

ON SALE FRIDAY 5 NOVEMBER
THE ONLY MAG WITH PLAYABLE DEMOS!



Stop these computer Crimes!



Every year thousands of PCs are running at criminally slow speeds.
Get one that won't at www.wired2fire.co.uk or call 08701 999283

Pyro 64

AMD Athlon 64 FX-55
X800 XT PE 256MB
A8V Deluxe socket 939
1GB Corsair TwinX Pro
Low Latency Memory
2x120 GB S-ATA HD in
RAID-0 Array
DVD-Rom Drive
CD-RW Drive
MX-1000 wireless laser
mouse & Internet
Navigator Keyboard
Windows XP Home
Wavemaster Case
525Watt Hiper PSU
1 Year Onsite warranty
£1999 (Inc VAT)



Value...

Excellence...

The Logical choice...

Tel. 0700 596 83 83



Fax. 0700 596 83 82

Own a piece of the future...



SOMETHING AMAZING HAS ARRIVED...

ULTRA HI TEC! ULTRA FAST! ULTRA QUIET!

AT LAST! CUTTING EDGE GAMING MACHINES AT THE RIGHT PRICE!

TOMMOROWS TECHNOLOGY IS AVAILABLE RIGHT NOW IN OUR SUPER-CHARGED, STATE OF THE ART COMPUTERS. BE THE FIRST TO TRY OUT DOOM 3 & HALF LIFE 2 AT AMAZING FPS RATES!

ULTRA LOW PRICES

OUR SYSTEMS ARE UP TO £500 CHEAPER THAN COMPARABLE MACHINES FROM OTHER SUPPLIERS!

WITH SYSTEMS STARTING AT JUST £899 INCLUDING VAT & FREE COURIER DELIVERY TO YOUR DOOR, YOU WON'T FIND A BETTER DEAL!



HUGE CHOICE OF EXTREME CASES,
SEE OUR WEBSITE
LIQUID COOLING NOW AVAILABLE.
WE INTEGRATE THESE
NEW SMALL SEALED
UNITS INSIDE OUR
CASES FOR EXTRA COOLING
AND SILENCE.

ATHLON 64 BIT SYSTEMS
FROM JUST £699 INC

CHECK THIS SPEC!

- PENTIUM 3.6 GHz 775 SERIES
- RADEON X800 XT GRAPHICS
- DDR2/600 CORSAIR TWINX RAM
- ASUS P5AD2 DELUXE 1925X MOTHERBOARDS
- FULLY LOADED
- PCI EXPRESS
- PRE-MODDED
- OVERCLOCK TO MORE THAN 4 GHz!
- £1799 INC VAT



01403 753008

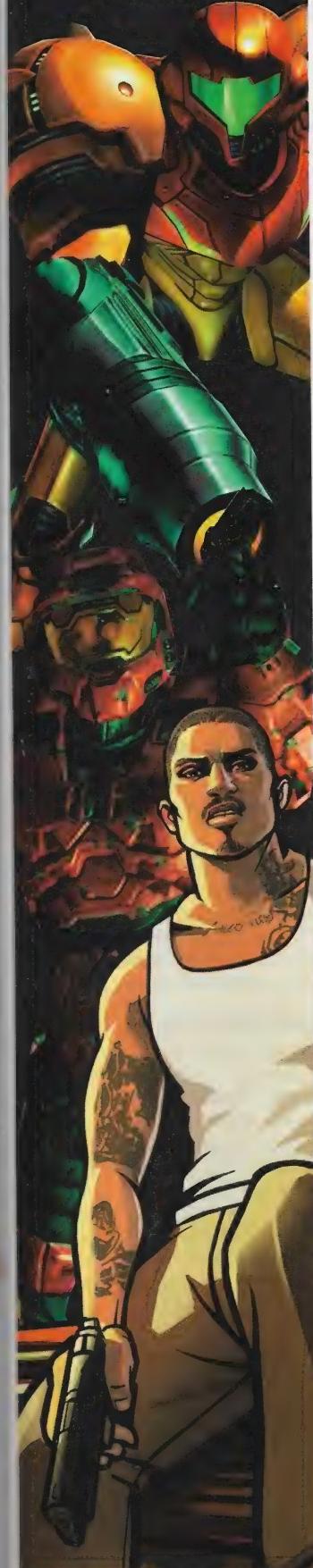
CHECK OUT FULL DETAILS OF THESE NEW, STATE OF THE ART GAMING MACHINES ON OUR WEBSITE:
WWW.WHISPERCOMPUTERS.COM



EDGE

Reviewed in issue 144:
Metroid Prime 2: Echoes
GTA: San Andreas
Halo 2

On sale now



We have 10 computers in our store five of which will run newer titles like Far Cry, Doom 3 and Half life 2.
We charge £2.00 per hour to play solo, over the net or over the lan.
Next Lan party late October in association with -Counter Strike clan T2K.
Internet access -£1.50 per hour

0208 948 8684

UK Lan party organisers, Rogue have an event coming in January 2005, for the weekend of the 21st -23rd. £60 per ticket for an entire weekend of gaming, £10 for spectators to the event.

Major tournaments in Counter Strike, Trackmania, Unreal Tournament, Battlefield 1942, Medal of Honor, Need for Speed Underground & much more, totaling 15 tournaments to play in.

Sponsored by companies such as



& many more

Come to our website to sign up for your place now
and join Rogue's online community
www.rogue-lans.co.uk

Lansupnorth

Extreme Gaming Components



Want to play Doom 3 & Half life 2?

Your one stop, on-line components store dedicated to bringing you high performance PC equipment

All our components have been hand picked by gaming experts and top games journalists and are regarded as THE essential pieces of hardware to bring the ultimate gaming experience to your PC

Come & see us



www.lansupnorthcomponents.co.uk

We are specialists in extraordinary PC components



AMD Intel XFX CORSAIR

ON THE DISCS

Featuring

- **31** top game demos
- **17** brilliant mods
- **30** great movies
- **32** system-boosting tools and utilities
- **9Gb of fun!**



THE PC GAMER PROMISE

- We pack every disc with the best new PC entertainment every month. If you can't find an item you were expecting, it probably just missed our deadline and you can bet we'll have it on next issue's disc.
- PCs are inherently unreliable. Sad but true. So if something on your disc doesn't work then we'll help sort it out. See our Troubleshooter guide over the page to see what help we can offer.
- We scour the earth to bring you the finest playable demos, movies, mods and utilities that PC gaming can provide. But if we miss a trick then tell our Disc Editor all about it. Email tom.francis@futurenet.co.uk

DVD vs CD



1 DVD 13.24 CDS!

The world is moving on and CDs can't keep up. Demos, movies and mods are bigger than ever and, inevitably, we can't fit everything on the ancient storage medium.

This issue's 9Gb DVD beats the CDs by:

- **24** playable demos
- **18** movies
- **13** mods
- **27** software tools
- **110 items in total**

UPGRADE OPTIONS

- Get a subscription. This reduces the cost of the DVD edition by £1.84 per issue. Page 56.
- **Get a DVD drive. There's one for only £23 in our Big Gear Hunt buyer's guide.**
- Miss out.

CD & DVD

NFS: UNDERGROUND 2

WHAT IS IT?

The feverishly-anticipated sequel to last year's romp through the neon-lit world of tuned cars. This demo features a free roam through part of the city but the real meat lies with the adrenaline-pumping circuit and drift races. There's even an online option.

DEMO GOALS

Explore the city and win both the circuit and drift challenges.



That 'Player 1' seems to crop up everywhere!

PERFORMANCE TIPS

- The harder you drive, the more rewards NFS Underground 2 will bestow upon you. Here are a few examples of how to gain precious nitros.
- Use powerslides on the tougher corners. They're the smartest way to get around the course.
- Discover the customary shortcuts - You'll cut minutes off your times. Tip: Keep an eye out for shiny paved surfaces - chances are they herald a detour.
- Hassle your opponents whenever possible. Their misery is your ticket to winning.
- Dodge oncoming civilian traffic by driving on the wrong side of the road. It'll give you a much-needed speed boost.
- In Explore mode, head down to the car shop for some beefed-up versions of your bog-standard Nissan 350Z.
- NFS asks a lot of your 3D card. If it isn't that hot a card, lower resolution with higher detail always looks better.

README

Developer In-house

Publisher Electronic Arts Requires 933MHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 32Mb DX9 3D card

CONTROLS Left Cursor steer left ■ Right Cursor steer right ■ Up Cursor throttle ■ Down Cursor reverse
■ Shift shift up ■ Ctrl shift down ■ Space handbrake ■ Alt nitro

CD & DVD

MOH: PACIFIC ASSAULT

WHAT IS IT?

Join online comrades in this multiplayer Second World War sequel set in the Pacific. Scramble through undergrowth! Decimate the ranks of the enemy! Smack people in the face with your rifle butt!

DEMO GOALS

Free-for-all and team deathmatches should need no introduction but there's also a team mission available. The Allies must secure

the Axis river observation post, infiltrate the bunker and destroy the machine guns, secure the ammo depot, commandeer the Japanese radio and transmit co-ordinates to their artillery to order a strike. The Japanese goal is to stop the Americans in their tracks.



If you need a medic, you can call him by pressing 'H'.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Win playing as the Allied forces but without an Engineer.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

- Stay close to your platoon, especially the medic. The Japanese can spread further as long as they leave a last man at base.
- The Americans should use explosives to take out the machine gun emplacements.
- Make use of the plentiful undergrowth to snipe away at your opponents.
- If at first you don't find a non-laggy server, keep plugging away, they are out there.
- The stars on the compass denote the target, the red cross denotes your medic and the other symbols represent your elite squad.
- Don't break cover unless you know where you are heading. The open is dangerous.

README

Developer In-house

Publisher Electronic Arts Requires 1.5GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 16Mb 3D card

CONTROLS W,A,S,D movement ■ Mouse look ■ Spacebar stance up ■ Left Ctrl stance down
■ Right Mouse melee attack ■ F use ■ Left Mouse fire/use ■ Mousewheel cycle weapons ■ R reload

EASTER EGG PCG 142

Open up the Content folder on Side A of last month's DVD and look for the Counter-Strike Source movies - there's a hidden one 38% funnier than the rest.

MORE THAN A MAGAZINE



FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR

WHAT IS IT?

Listen up son! Ever dreamed of joining the Army? Want to get yourself knee-deep in muck and glory? Or are you too scared to get shot for your country? Sample urban conflict in the safety of your own home with this worryingly realistic squad-based shooter.

DEMO GOALS

This demo teaches the controls available to guide your squads through battle in a



It's tough, it's gritty and it's up to you to get them out.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Complete the demo without any of your men taking a bullet.

training mission, and without the drag of having to share a bunk with Private Pyle. Alternatively skip straight to the live-fire action for a quick tour in the barely fictional Zekestan.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

- If you want to skip the slightly laboured training section here's what you need to know: stay behind cover as much as possible and, when moving, order one squad to stay put and use suppressing fire to keep the other safe.
- Don't get trigger happy - ammo is limited. Save at least one M203 or smoke grenade for the fourth and final section of the mission. If one squad is particularly low on ammo then use that team to rescue the third objective, as you can commandeer their rounds.
- When attacking down a narrow alley your squads will have trouble covering your advance. Back one team up to approach from a different angle and shut that bad man down.

README

Developer Pandemic

Publisher THQ Requires 1GHz CPU, 256MB RAM, 64MB 3D card

DISC EXTRAS

More than just demos...

+17 mods

Desert Combat is finally Final, Dawn Of War goes Epic, Natural Selection gets a Hive Mind, and Zodiac lets you play Deus Ex as Paul.



BATTLEFIELD 1942: Desert Combat is finished!

DUSTY!

+30 movies

Stunning trailers for Halo 2's single and multiplayer games, close shaves in Battlefield 2 and World of Warcraft's intro.



HALO 2: The Master Chief suggests you bring it on.

+26 game extras

Singleplayer maps for Doom 3, new sounds for CS: Source, bonus content for Panzers and Warcraft, and patches for all!



GUSTY!

DOOM 3: Arena lets Doom 3 taste fresh air.

CD & DVD

FLATOUT

WHAT IS IT?

A driving game designed around a stomach-wrenching physics engine. Your plucky driver (well, foolhardy, actually, where is his helmet?) can be thrown from his souped-up motor if you crash with the speed of the maniac. Also, in the spirit of an Olympic year, the game features a series of amusing field events to complement the tracks.

DEMO GOALS

Burn around Finchley Forest, a woodland rally-type course, then race a merry jig on tarmac in the Fairgrass Cup. Finally, launch our daredevil through the windscreen to achieve the highest jump possible at the Grand Slam Stadium. At least that explains why he never wears a seatbelt.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

► Crashes and scrapes add to your car's Nitro reserve. Flying through flimsy barriers and jostling with your opponents is a good way to do this.

Launching your car into a lorry (who parked them there anyway? Don't they know there's a race on?) is not, because although you will max out your Nitro, it'll barely be enough to



Leave the other drivers choking on fat pipe.

DEMO CHALLENGE
See if you can manage more than 280m in the high jump.

- bring you back level with the pack.
- Shortcuts are not allowed, despite an inviting ramp in Finchley Forest. Conversely, do take the route under the juggernaut on the tarmac track. It isn't much faster, but it is a lot cooler.
- If things go wrong but you haven't actually crashed, you can often return the car to the middle of the track, even if the 'reset' message isn't displayed.

README

Developer Bugbear Entertainment

Publisher Empire Interactive Requires 1.5GHz CPU, 256MB RAM, 64MB 3D card

CONTROLS Cursor Keys steer, accelerate, brake ■ Space handbrake ■ R reset car ■ Ctrl nitro ■ C camera
■ Esc pause ■ Enter start

+Foul play

Cheats, codes and hacks courtesy of www.cheathappens.com

+Bonus features

- Resources - including the PC Companion Guide, the PC GAMER dictionary, The Big Phat Online Games Glossary, the Reviews database, contact directory, expanded articles, and more....
- Blast From the Past - classic articles from the PC GAMER archive.
- Galleries - Bonus screenshots.
- Plus patches, shareware, drivers...

See the back of your box for full disc contents.

THE TOOLKIT

Essential tools and apps

Game apps

Match-making	X-Fire
Server browser	All-Seeing Eye
Voice communicator	Skype
Chat software	Trillian
Screen grabber	IrfanView
Emulation	Dosbox, ScummVM
Demo viewer	Seismovision
Video capture	FRAPS

Performance

Download manager	BitTornado
Uninstaller	EasyUninstall 6
Registry cleaning	Regcleaner
Video card driver	Radeon, nVidia
System monitor ..	Motherboard Monitor
Benchmarking	3D Mark 05

Security

Virus checker	AVG
Anti-spam	Spybot Search & Destroy
Anti-spyware	AdAware
Anti-popup	Coolweb Shredder
Firewall	Zone Alarm

Media Management

File compressor	WinRAR
Picture viewer	IrfanView
PDF viewer	Acrobat Reader
Web browser	Mozilla Firefox
FTP client	Filezilla
Email client	Mozilla Thunderbird
Music player	WinAmp
Movie player	Media Player Classic
Movie codec	DivX

TROUBLE SHOOTER

Is your coverdisc playing up? Help is at hand

1 If the menu program does not automatically start, the autorun feature may be disabled on your PC. Go to the START/RUN command on the task-bar and type D:\PCG.EXE (where D is the drive letter).

2 For problems with an individual demo or application, refer to the Help section on the disc. Also ensure your drivers and DirectX version are up-to-date.

3 If your disc is defective then return it to the address below, along with a description of the fault and an SAE: Disc Department, Reader Support, Future Publishing Ltd, Bath, BA1 2BW

4 As soon as we discover issues with programs on the disc, we will post solutions on the Disc Support forum. Check here to see if there's a quick fix: <http://forum.pcgamer.co.uk>

We can only provide assistance with technical problems directly related to our coverdiscs. The PC GAMER discs have been thoroughly tested and certified 'virus free' by an independent organisation. We recommend that you always run an up-to-date virus checker on ANY software before running it. Future Publishing Ltd cannot accept any responsibility for disruption, damage and/or loss to your data or your computer system which may occur while using these discs, the programs or the data on them. Ensure that you have backups of data contained on your hard drives before running any new software.

CD & DVD

MEN OF VALOUR

WHAT IS IT?

Yet more jungle warfare, this time joining the US Army in the hunt for Ho Chi Minh and his Commie cronies. Tense first-person action in a lethal, verdant environment.

DEMO GOALS

"If they run, they're VC. If they stand still, they're well-trained VC." Assist your squad in clearing a couple of villages then go and rescue that darned fool reporter who insisted on tagging along.



You'll need eyes in the back of your head to survive.

DEMO CHALLENGE
Complete the patrol without taking any hits.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

- Watch out for traps along the path. You don't want to end up skewered with bamboo spikes.
- You don't have a lot of ammo, especially considering your squad only seems to lend you passing support in firefights. Switch your gun to semi-automatic with the 'Alt' key, and rummage through the pockets of your fallen enemies to pick up extra munitions (and health canteens) by pressing and holding 'Space'. The other villagers won't take too kindly to such desecration, so make sure the area is clear first. The pile of Vietnamese bodies at the far end of the rope bridge is the best place.
- If shot, seek cover (or just hit 'V' to go prone), then hold down 'F' to stabilise your health meter with bandages.
- Take cover and use the precise aim mode to clear areas before advancing. You can often kill the enemy through just a tiny gap between buildings.

README

Developer 2015

Publisher Vivendi Requires 1.3 GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card

CONTROLS

W, A, S, D movement ■ Left Mouse fire ■ Middle Mouse melee ■ Right Mouse precise aim
■ Crouch ■ Mousewheel cycle weapons ■ V prone ■ F bandage ■ Space use/search ■ Q quick grenade

DVD

PAINKILLER: BATTLE OUT OF HELL

WHAT IS IT?

Continue car crash victim Daniel Garner's bloody quest to discover why he's been barred from entering the Pearly Gates. A visually-enhanced revamp of the original game's huge Military Base level, illustrating new graphical effects in the expansion pack.

DEMO GOALS

Wipe those military hellspawn from the face of the earth and finish the level in one piece.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

- Painkiller finally has a quick save/load feature. Use it. Often.
- Save your rocket launcher ammo for disposing of the tough flamethrower-wielding hell beasts with just a single hit. Otherwise you're likely to get burned.
- Don't forget to constantly collect the souls of vanquished enemies as they'll deliver a much-needed health boost. Collect enough and you'll be able to temporarily morph into an invulnerable demon yourself.
- You'll be confronted with four death-dealing tanks at the level's climax. Best save a demon

DEMO CHALLENGE
Find all seven secret areas and four Holy Items in the level.

morph or you'll die horribly.

- At the end of the level, use the mecha-wrench to disable the base's defences. Only kidding. Just shoot everything that moves.

README

Developer People Can Fly

Publisher DreamCatcher Requires 1.5GHz, 384Mb RAM, 64Mb DirectX 8.1 3D card



Who-oo do you think you are kidding Mr Hitler?

CONTROLS

A strafe left ■ D strafe right ■ W move forward ■ S move backward ■ Space jump
■ Left Mouse Button fire ■ Right Mouse Button alternate fire ■ Mousewheel cycle weapons



NEXUS MULTIPLAYER DEMO

WHAT IS IT?

A Bloody Massacre over the Infernal Moon. Well, that's what this team deathmatch map is called anyway. Combat and strategy in space are the order of the day as you assume control of a selection of craft, from frigates to full-on heavy battleships, and attempt to eliminate your online foes.

DEMO GOALS

Choose your ships and weapons, join one of two fleets on one of the many online servers and help gain a victory for your side.

PERFORMANCE TIPS

- *Nexus: The Jupiter Incident* can initially be confusing. Make sure you have explored the readme file and have a basic grasp of the controls before you venture online.
- Try to take advantage of a seeming imbalance with torpedo weapons. They are able to inflict unholy amounts of damage even when an enemy's shields are up, leading to some crushing victories.
- Maximise the pain dealt out by your frigates by using their deflection drive. Scan an enemy, blast its engines then enjoy a free reign

DEMO CHALLENGE
Simply try and lose as few of your own ships as possible on your way to victory.

README

Developer Mithis

Publisher Vivendi Requires 1.2GHz, 128Mb RAM, 64Mb DirectX 9.0b 3D card



It's war in space and it's a tricky old business.

CONTROLS F1 auto control ■ F2 approach target ■ F3 hold position ■ F4 run away ■ F5 drain shield ■ F6 attack devices ■ F7 destroy hull ■ F8 use artillery ■ F10 recon ■ F11 guard ■ F12 activate interplanetary drive



PRIMA STRATEGY GUIDES

WHAT IS IT?

A sample section from each of two new official Prima strategy guides for *Medal of Honour: Pacific Assault* and *Half-Life 2*.

WHAT? HALF-LIFE 2? DON'T TELL ME, DON'T TELL ME!

Don't worry, we won't: you're not alone. Everyone in the PC GAMER office who hasn't yet played *Half-Life 2* is too afraid of spoilers to even look at this strategy sampler, but rest assured that it's only chapter two, and will only whet your appetite, not ruin it.

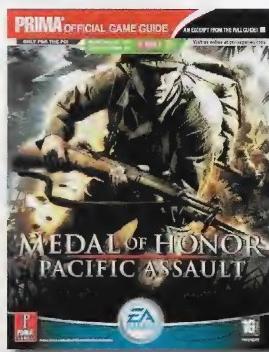
This strategy guide will also provide an invaluable companion to successfully guiding Gordon Freeman through his almighty enjoyable exploits when you inevitably shell out for *Half-Life 2*. You can ensure that you don't miss any of the more incidental in-game delights, like the dancing Hawaiian hula doll in the doctor's laboratory. Those of a

nervous disposition can get a heads-up to keep ol' Gordo breathing using the handy red 'Caution' boxouts. Best of all, you'll never have to curse your poor sense of direction again, as you can keep a map on your lap to aid easy navigation.

The *Medal of Honour* maps also put a smile on our faces. After all, what leader of men would consider sending their troops in to the slaughter without good, hard intelligence? Don't answer that.

Anyway, it is most comforting to have a clear overview of the in-game arena. Plus, did you know that the Japanese Arisaka rifle is superior in jungle combat to the Reising SMG? And do you know where Willy is? Actually, don't answer that either. But do become the envy of all your friends with this pair of performance-enhancing guides.

README
Developer Prima
Publisher In-house
Requires Adobe Acrobat Reader (on the DVD)



CLASSIC DEMO

Play an all-time great

Total Annihilation

➤ **WHAT'S THE GAME?** Chris Taylor's acclaimed milestone in the history of RTS featured 3D terrain and sci-fi units, plus enough freedom and subtlety to keep it played by a thriving online community seven years after release.

➤ **WHY WE CHOSE IT** To accompany this month's Long Play feature, and because building and battling armies of clones and mechwarriors has a timeless appeal when done this well. Plus the death-bots had names like Peewee and Rocko.



It's time to remind yourself why this was so good.

TAG CHALLENGE

Come and have a go

- **DEMO NFS:** Underground 2
- **CHALLENGE** Work yourself up to a red-eyed, finger-blistered, street-racing fury by pelting around the demo with traffic set to 'off'.
- **BEAT** One minute and six seconds set by Ross.
- **PRIZE** Some old junk hanging around the office. Sorry, gaming valuables beyond compare. Maybe.
- **RESULTS** In PC Gamer 145.



HOW TO ENTER

1 IrfanView is our picture-grabber of choice. Install it from the Toolkit on CD1 or Side A of the DVD.

2 Take a screenshot of the end level screen that proves your best time.

3 Email it to endeavour@futurenet.co.uk, with the subject line "PCG143 TAG Challenge" along with your name and full address.

PCG 141 TAG WINNER

It came as no surprise that you took on the challenge and absolutely battered our time. Congratulations to Chris who wins something very special. Well, sort of.

Chris Sands	3.22.94
Melvin Blunt	3.30.72
James Ordish	3.32.15
Emmett Scully	3.36.09
Dave Downton	4.08.39



GOLDEN JOYSTICK AWARDS 2004™ WINNERS ANNOUNCED

PS2 Game of the Year

Burnout 3: Takedown

□ PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts

GameCube Game of the Year

Mario Kart: Double Dash!!

□ PUBLISHER: Nintendo

Handheld Game of the Year

Sonic Advance 3

□ PUBLISHER: THQ

Xbox Game of the Year

Fable

□ PUBLISHER: Microsoft

PC Game of the Year

Doom 3

□ PUBLISHER: Activision

Online Game of the Year

Battlefield Vietnam

□ PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts

Publisher of the Year

Electronic Arts



Retailer of the year

Amazon.co.uk



Hardware of the Year

GBA SP NES Edition

□ Nintendo

Unsung Hero Game of the year

The Chronicles of Riddick:
Escape from Butcher Bay

□ PUBLISHER: Vivendi

Editor's Award: Game of the Year

Pro Evolution Soccer 4

□ PUBLISHER: Konami

Hall of Fame - Industry Personality of the Year

Warren Spector



□ Ion Storm

Most Wanted Game for Xmas

GTA: San Andreas

□ PUBLISHER: Rockstar Games

Most Wanted Game for 2005

The Legend of Zelda

□ PUBLISHER: Nintendo

Ultimate Game of the Year

Doom 3

□ PUBLISHER: Activision

Sun Award: Ultimate Gaming Hero

Sonic the Hedgehog

□ DEVELOPER: SEGA



CHECK OUT THE WINNERS AT:

WWW.GOLDENJOYSTICK.CO.UK

In association with



Sponsored by



NEXT MONTH'S

PC GAMER

ON SALE DEC 23

"STAY ON TARGET!"

S.T.A.L.K.E.R. GETS A REACTION



All magazine contents and gifts subject to change. Some gifts not available overseas.

REVIEWS

- Vampire: Bloodlines
- World of Warcraft
- Pro Evo Soccer 4
- Pirates!
- EverQuest II
- Champ Manager 5
- Children of the Nile
- Second Sight

FEATURES

- American McGee speaks!
- Top-notch Doom 3 levels
- Overclocking: be afraid, be very afraid
- Motherboards: not boring at all!

DEMOS

- Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory
- Close Combat
- LotR: Battle for Middle-Earth
- Vampire: Bloodlines
- Pirates!
- Star Wars Battlefront

THE INDIGNITY!

MARK'S MAN MANAGEMENT MASTERCLASS

With your Editor, Mark Donald



THIS MONTH Replace truculent staff with obedient drones.

PC GAMER

THE WORLD'S BEST-SELLING PC GAMES MAGAZINE

PC GAMER is read by gamers in the UK AUSTRALIA USA SPAIN FRANCE RUSSIA SWEDEN ITALY ISRAEL MALAYSIA



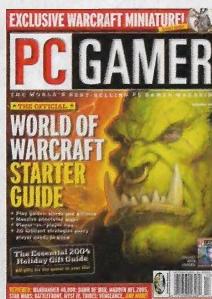
MALAYSIA



FRANCE



ITALY



USA



RUSSIA



SWEDEN

GET READY FOR THE DRIVE OF YOUR LIFE

WONKA
SHIFT_yours



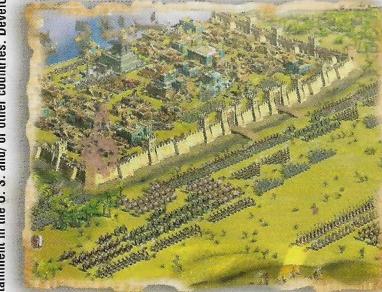
SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED

Wonka accepts no responsibility for the car if it refuses to run. Just because we shipped it without a few 'essential' engine parts doesn't mean you can expect us to fix it straight away. And if these fixes don't work it'll be, ooh, a month before the next upgrade. Look, we know we should have shipped it in full working order but you lot got really insistent and wanted it early. And besides, we needed the money. We've got bills to pay you know. **That's it, it's all over (until our next mod, released Thursday, December 23).**

ALEXANDER™



OFFICIAL GAME OF THE MOVIE
FROM THE CREATORS OF 'COSSACKS'



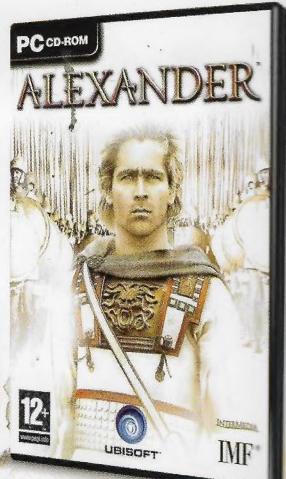
EMBODY ALEXANDER,
THE MOST SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIST EVER



COMMAND MASSIVE ARMIES IN AUTHENTIC
BATTLES OF UP TO 64,000 UNITS ON
LAND AND SEA



WHAT IF...? FIGHT AGAINST ALEXANDER
AND CHANGE HISTORY



- CHARACTERS, SOUND AND IMAGERY FROM THE MOVIE, RELEASING 7TH JANUARY
- MORE THAN 10 MINUTES WITH NEVER PUBLISHED SCENES
- INTERVIEW WITH VANGELIS AND 'MAKING OF' FOOTAGE FROM THE MOVIE SOUNDTRACK

WWW.ALEXANDER-THEGAME.COM / WWW.ALEXANDERTHEMOVIE.COM

PC CD-ROM

IMF®
© 2004 IMF3

INTERMEDIA

WARNER BROS. PICTURES
© 2004 Warner Bros. Ent. All Rights Reserved



www.pegi.info